

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/66906>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

The Fractured Consensus

**How competing visions of grand strategy challenge the geopolitical identity of
American leadership under the Obama presidency**

Author: Georg Löfflmann

Thesis submitted for awarding of academic degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

University of Warwick
Department of Politics and International Studies

Date of Submission: 30 September 2014

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Illustrations	i.
Acknowledgements	ii.
Inclusion of Published Work	iii
Abstract	iv.
Introduction	p. 1
<i>A critical research perspective of grand strategy</i>	p. 9
<i>Research question</i>	p. 12
<i>Research statement</i>	p. 12
<i>Theoretical background</i>	p. 14
<i>Methodology</i>	p. 16
<i>Chapter Outline</i>	p. 21
 1. Reimagining grand strategy:	
From Clausewitz to critical geopolitics	p. 25
<i>Part I Grand strategy</i>	p. 26
<i>Strategy and grand strategy</i>	p. 26
<i>Grand strategy in International Relations: Realists vs. the rest</i>	p. 29
<i>A critical security studies perspective of grand strategy:</i>	
<i>Power/knowledge, discourse and intertextuality</i>	p. 36
<i>Basic discourses of grand strategy:</i>	
<i>Hegemony, engagement and restraint</i>	p. 44
<i>Part II Geopolitics</i>	p. 51
<i>Geopolitics - Past and present</i>	p. 51
<i>Classical geopolitics from Mackinder to Haushofer:</i>	
<i>Heartland, sea power and Lebensraum</i>	p. 53
<i>Geopolitics makes a comeback</i>	p. 56
<i>The critical turn</i>	p. 60
<i>American grand strategy as geopolitical discourse: Constructing the role and position of the United States in world politics</i>	p. 65
<i>Conclusion</i>	p. 72

2. Filming hegemony - Popular geopolitics

and the cinematic production of national security p. 75

Critical geopolitics, film and popular narratives of grand strategy p. 81

*Heroism, militarization and the representation of the
geopolitical identity of the United States on screen* p. 89

*Hollywood, the Pentagon and the cinematic production of
national security* p. 97

Counter-narratives in national security cinema p. 116

Conclusion p. 122

3. Competing visions for America – Popular grand strategy

discourses on the *New York Times* best sellers list p. 127

Hegemony between American leadership and American empire p. 131

Engagement with the post-American world p. 142

America is coming home – The case for restraint p. 151

Nationalism, populism and American exceptionalism p. 160

Conclusion p. 169

4. The American grand strategy discourse in International Relations p. 173

*U.S. grand strategy experts, IR theory and the
impact of academic research on political practice* p. 181

The grand strategy debate in Foreign Affairs p. 191

Rethinking hegemony: The geopolitical imagination of global leadership p. 193

Engagement between leadership and partnership p. 200

Leading from behind – The American superpower under restraint p. 205

Conclusion p. 212

5. The Washington consensus: Think tanks, national security experts

and American grand strategy in the public policy debate p. 216

*Budget hawks versus defense hawks: Grand strategy under sequestration
and the debate on the Right* p. 223

*Rebalancing hegemony – The Asian pivot, the Obama administration
and the bipartisan consensus on American leadership* p. 235

*A new way forward? A progressive grand strategy
of sustainable security* p. 244

<i>From grand strategy research to policy making: The Centre for a New American Security (CNAS) and the Obama administration</i>	p. 251
<i>Conclusion</i>	p. 257
6. Strategic Vision: National security, American defense policy and the geopolitics of military preeminence	p. 261
<i>U.S. defense policy planning and the geopolitical vision of American leadership in a multipolar system</i>	p. 266
<i>Superpower under restraint: Sequestration and its impact on defense policy and the military planning of American grand strategy</i>	p. 275
<i>From COIN to Air-Sea Battle: The geopolitics of military strategy</i>	p. 284
<i>‘Grooming for leadership’ - The U.S. military and the institutionalization of grand strategy thinking in senior military education</i>	p. 296
<i>Conclusion</i>	p. 301
7. President Obama – Vision for Change?	p. 305
<i>Leading through engagement in a post-American world</i>	p. 313
<i>Nation-building at home, covert operations abroad</i>	p. 327
<i>Leading from behind: Hegemony between military restraint and the global retrenchment of American power</i>	p. 337
<i>Conclusion</i>	p. 350
8. Conclusion	p. 354
<i>Limitations of research</i>	p. 360
<i>Advantages of research design</i>	p. 361
<i>American grand strategy as discourse of geopolitical identity: The worldview of American hegemony</i>	p. 363
<i>Competing visions, conflicting discourses: Hybridity, intertextuality and the ‘breaking point’ of the grand strategy discourse</i>	p. 367
<i>Beyond American grand strategy: A critical research perspective for the study of identity and security in world politics</i>	p. 371
9. List of abbreviations	p. 375
10. Appendix – List of Interviews	p. 376
11. Bibliography	p. 377

List of Tables and Illustrations

Fig. 1 Model of discourse analysis	p. 21
Fig. 2 Discourses of American grand strategy	p. 50
Fig. 3 The World - Colonial Possessions and Commercial Highways 1910	p. 52
Fig. 4 ‘The Pentagon’s new map’	p. 59
Fig. 5 List of films surveyed	p. 87
Fig. 6 <i>Iron Man 2</i> (2010)	p. 90
Fig. 7 <i>G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero</i> (1985)	p. 93
Fig. 8 <i>Marvel’s The Avengers</i> (2012)	p. 97
Fig. 9 <i>Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen</i> (2009)	p. 107
Fig. 10 <i>Battleship</i> (2012)	p. 110
Fig. 11 <i>Act of Valor</i> (2012)	p. 113
Fig. 12 <i>The Messenger</i> (2009)	p. 114
Fig. 13 <i>Captain America: The Winter Soldier</i> (2014)	p. 118
Fig. 14 <i>White House Down</i> (2013)	p. 121
Fig. 15 Thompson Reuters Journal Citation Reports 2009-2013: Top 10 International Relations journals ranked by impact factor	p. 178
Fig. 16 List of Think Tanks	p. 221
Fig. 17 The United States ‘Unified Command Plan’	p. 286
Fig. 18 President Obama at West Point	p. 309
Fig. 19 Barack Obama on the campaign trail in 2008	p. 322

Acknowledgements

Writing a PhD thesis can at once be a wonderfully stimulating intellectual experience, and a daunting task that isolates one from the rest of the world. Coming as a German PhD student to the United Kingdom to write about American grand strategy and American identity with the help of a French philosopher might even seem a little bit presumptuous.

However, it is my conviction that one of the most important contributions we can make in the study of International Relations is to open up new avenues of inquiry, to give a different perspective that allows us to see beyond our own horizon. In this sense, I hope this outsider's perspective on America and its role in the world has done justice to the subject, and that it can contribute to the important debate about where this fascinating and conflicted country is headed.

I am especially grateful to the many people that took the time from their busy schedules to see me for interviews in the United States, from Boston to Washington DC and down to Beaufort, South Carolina: Andrew Bacevich, Shawn Brimley, Thomas Donnelly, Christopher Preble, Mark 'Puck' Mykleby, Michael O'Hanlon, and Colonel Greg Schultz all gave me precious insights into the competing visions for American grand strategy. I also want to thank Warwick University for generously providing the funding that allowed me to undertake this fieldwork.

Most of all, I am indebted to my supervisors Stuart Croft and Nick Vaughan-Williams, whose friendly advice, constructive criticism, humor, and wonderful support has accompanied me through these last three years. This thesis would not have been what it is without them.

Finally, I want to thank my parents Ursula and Werner, and my wife Lisa, whose love and support have always given me the confidence to pursue my goals and develop my talents. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Inclusion of Published Work

Material from chapter 2 (pp. 91-106) on the cooperation of the U.S. Department of Defense with the American motion picture industry has been published as:

Georg Löffmann, “Hollywood, the Pentagon, and the cinematic production of national security,” *Critical Studies on Security* 1, no. 3 (2013): pp. 280-295.

Grey, my friend, is every theory, and green alone life's golden tree.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Abstract

For the last seventy years the United States of America has been the dominant political, economic, military, and cultural influence in the world. Under President Obama, this position is being challenged. In politics, academia, and popular media, the established continuity of American leadership is contrasted against the dynamics of an emerging 'post-American world.' Elements of Obama's foreign and security policy, such as 'leading from behind,' have raised questions if America still believes in its national exceptionalism, and if it follows a grand strategy designed to secure its global hegemony.

Against this backdrop, this thesis aims to make an original contribution to knowledge by moving beyond traditional understandings of grand strategy as an exclusive calculation of material resources, and coherent vision to align means and ends.

The main argument is that American grand strategy cannot be reduced to an abstract product of scientific rationality, but must be understood as an identity performing discourse, where a geopolitical vision of a country's role and position in the world is linked to its national security policy. Drawing from literature in critical security studies and critical geopolitics, the thesis examines how representations of geopolitical identity are intertextually connected across different discursive domains, from popular culture, to academic expertise, and policymaking, and how the cross-discursive interplay of identity and practice confirms and contests dominant concepts of political knowledge.

The thesis concludes that, beyond an established identity paradigm of American exceptionalism, indispensability and hegemony, American grand strategy under President Obama is a multidimensional and inherently conflicted discourse, fluctuating between a reconfirmation and reformulation of American leadership. This complex and nuanced geopolitical vision of leadership however, both emphasizing cooperative engagement ('burden sharing') and military restraint ('nation-building at home') has failed to provide a new consensus on America's role in the world.

*To my parents Ursula and Werner,
and my wife Lisa*

Introduction

The United States is once again debating its decline. Books with alarming sounding titles like *After America: Get Ready for Armageddon*, *Drift*, or *That Used to Be Us* regularly feature at the top of the *New York Times* best sellers lists.¹ In leading American media and expert publications, from the *Washington Post* to the *National Interest*, the United States under Barack Obama appears ‘shrunk,’ its foreign policy one of ‘weakness’ and ‘retreat’.² Op-ed columnists, foreign policy experts, and pundits warn of China’s territorial claims in the Asia-Pacific, Russian incursions into Ukraine, and the multiple crises in the Middle East as dangerous signs that American leadership in the world is waning.³

The rest of the world takes notice as well. The headline featuring on the cover of the British *Economist* on March 3, 2014 worriedly asked: “What would America fight

¹ Gideon Rachmann, “American Nightmare,” *Financial Times*, March 16, 2012, accessed June 1, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/941a0132-6d37-11e1-ab1a-00144feab49a.html#axzz39PtVqDti>; Rachel Maddow, *Drift* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), [*New York Times* best seller, no. 1, May 06, 2012]; Mark Steyn, *After America: Get Ready for Armageddon* (Washington DC: Regnery, 2011), [*New York Times* best seller, no. 4, August 28, 2011]; Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum, *That Used To Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), [*New York Times* best seller, no. 2, October 2, 2011].

² Frank Bruni, “America the Shrunk,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/04/opinion/sunday/bruni-america-the-shrunk.html?_r=0; Michael Gerson, “Obama’s foreign policy and the risks of retreat,” *Washington Post*, March 19, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-obamas-foreign-policy-and-the-risks-of-retreat/2013/03/18/526e9ad6-8ffa-11e2-bdea-e32ad90da239_story.html; Ian Bremmer, “The Tragic Decline of American Foreign Policy,” *National Interest*, April 16, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-tragic-decline-american-foreign-policy-10264>;

³ See Michael Cohen, “America stands accused of retreat from its global duties. Nonsense,” *Guardian*, April 12, 2014, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/12/us-foreign-policy-retreatism-obama-accused-weakness>; The Editorial Board, “President Obama and the World,” *New York Times*, May 3, 2014, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/04/opinion/sunday/president-obama-and-the-world.html>; the *New York Times* editorial board has commented how this criticism of Obama’s foreign policy is not limited to the Republican opposition, and conservative circles from *Fox News* to Charles Krauthammer, but includes critics from Democrats as well: “It is tempting to dismiss criticism from right-wing Republicans like Senator Ted Cruz, who knows little about foreign policy; from Senator John McCain, who knows quite a lot but advocates a military response to almost every crisis; and from former Bush officials. [...] But there is also powerful criticism from Democrats, liberals and centrists, who fault Mr. Obama’s handling of Syria (some want airstrikes, some want more weapons for rebels) and Ukraine (many want weapons for the government). His critics are inconsistent in their philosophies and have failed to offer cogent alternatives to Mr. Obama’s policies. But the perception — of weakness, dithering, inaction, there are many names for it — has indisputably had a negative effect on Mr. Obama’s global standing;” *ibid.*

for?” The foreign and security policy of the Obama administration was summed up by a damning verdict: “America is no longer as alarming to its foes, or reassuring to its friends.”⁴ In a similar vein, the English-language *Japan Times* stated that: “The American-led global economic and financial system is broken.”⁵ The German international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* speculated that Barack Obama might be: “(...) the first president forced to deal with the U.S.’ downgrading from biggest superpower to co-player on the world stage.”⁶

President Obama, it is said by critics, does not have a grand strategy to match Franklin D. Roosevelt or Harry S. Truman, who successfully led in similar times of geopolitical upheaval and existential threat to the national security of the United States.⁷ Obama in turn repeatedly stated that the United States remained the world’s ‘indispensable nation’ today, and for the foreseeable future, declaring in the 2012 State of the Union address that: “Anyone who tells you that America is in decline or that our influence has waned, doesn’t know what they are talking about.”⁸ Here, Obama directly referenced an article written by the neoconservative scholar Robert Kagan: *Not Fade Away: The Myth of American Decline*.⁹ In Kagan’s view, the

⁴ “The decline of deterrence,” *Economist*, May 3, 2014, p. 37.

⁵ Kevin Rafferty, “Where is the global leadership?” *Japan Times*, November 12, 2013, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/11/12/commentary/world-commentary/where-is-the-global-leadership/#.U9-WrhacIoE>.

⁶ Frank Sieren, “Opinion: The world’s superpower no more,” *Deutsche Welle*, July 15, 2014, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/opinion-the-worlds-superpower-no-more/a-17788131>.

⁷ Paul Bonicelli, “Five years is long enough to wait for an Obama grand strategy,” *Foreign Policy*, May 6, 2013, accessed, June 3, 2014, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/06/five_years_is_long_enough_to_wait_for_an_obama_grand_strategy; William C. Martel, “America’s Grand Strategy Disaster,” *National Interest*, June 9, 2014, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/americas-grand-strategy-disaster-10627>.

⁸ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address,” January 24, 2012, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>.

⁹ Robert Kagan, “Not Fade Away: Against the Myth of American Decline,” *New Republic*, January 11, 2012, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/politics/magazine/99521/america-world-power-declinism>; before the State of the Union address Obama apparently directly mentioned Kagan’s article to a group of journalists, referencing individual points in the text, cf. Josh Rogin, “Obama embraces Romney advisor’s theory on ‘The Myth of American Decline’,” *Foreign Policy*, January 26, 2012, accessed August 4, 2014, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/26/obama_embraces_romney_advisor_s_theory_on_the_myth_o

liberal world order that has advanced after World War 2, marked by democracy, economic prosperity and great power peace depends on America's global hegemony and military supremacy.¹⁰ Far from being in decline, the United States has the chance to enjoy another two hundred years as the principle power and indispensable guarantor of a world order that 'America made.' Provided it is willing to continue to play the role of 'liberal hegemon,' and pursue a grand strategy of global primacy.¹¹

Yet, Kagan notwithstanding, America's global leadership role is more contested than ever. While the presidency of George W. Bush was characterized by frequent debates over American empire, U.S. hegemony, and unilateralism, under President Obama the discussion appears to have shifted: the days of American unipolarity and 'hyper-power' seem numbered, likely to be replaced by a 'post-American world.'¹² In popular media, expert discussions, and official discourses, from *Foreign Policy* magazine to the Center of a New American Security think tank (CNAS), and the National Intelligence Council of the United States (NIC), the future of the geopolitical order is expected to be defined by the end of American political, military

[f_american_decline](#); Kagan would later follow up on his article, and the best selling book developed from it, *The World America Made*, to accuse the Obama administration of abandoning America's global leadership role, and to invite instability and the unraveling of a liberal world order. According to Kagan, the negative effects of this retrenchment were already visible in Ukraine and Iraq, see Robert Kagan, "Superpowers don't get to retire," *The New Republic*, May 26, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117859/allure-normalcy-what-america-still-owes-world>.

¹⁰ Robert Kagan, *The World American Made* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The term was made famous by the journalist and author in his bestselling book: Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).

and economic preeminence.¹³ This results in potentially far-reaching changes to the international system, and a redefinition of the role of the United States in the world.¹⁴ Exactly these ‘tectonic shifts’ in the geopolitical landscape let Charles Kupchan propose that American grand strategy, the ‘fundamental tenets guiding the nation’s statecraft,’ should be reconsidered in the face of a fast changing international order.¹⁵ According to Kupchan, Fareed Zakaria, Zbigniew Brzezinski and others, the United States should no longer seek an elusive and unattainable primacy, as promoted by Kagan and other neoconservatives, but pursue a grand strategy of cooperative engagement and joint global responsibilities.¹⁶

In contrast to such liberal visions of engagement, calls for America to ‘come home’ are also gaining leverage in the United States. A much reported Pew research poll of December 2013 found that among Americans support for global engagement was at a historic low.¹⁷ Prominent International Relations (IR) scholars, think tank researchers, and American politicians are proposing a grand strategy of ‘restraint’

¹³ Cf., Elbridge Colby and Paul Lettow, “Have we hit peak America?,” *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2014, accessed August 5, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/07/03/have_we_hit_peak_america; National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, 2012); Robert O. Work and Shawn Brimley, *20YY. Preparing for War in the Robotic Age* (Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2014).

¹⁴ Whether the result of this geopolitical transition will be a multipolar order, as suggested by Zakaria and others, in which the United States will exist as *primus inter pares*, maintaining a stable, international system in concert with others, or if the end of American hegemony will result in a descend into a volatile non-polarity, where no group of states or international organizations is responsible for global governance is intensely debated, see for example, Charles A. Kupchan, *No One’s World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Gideon Rachmann, *Zero-sum World: Power and Politics After the Crash* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010); Ian Bremmer, *Every Nation for Itself: What Happens When No One Leads the World* (London: Penguin, 2012).

¹⁵ Charles A. Kupchan, “Grand Strategy: The Four Pillars of the Future,” *Democracy Journal*, no. 23, Winter 2012, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.democracyjournal.org/23/grand-strategy-the-four-pillars-of-the-future.php?page=all>.

¹⁶ See for example, Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, pp. 235-250; Kupchan, *No-One’s World*, pp. 202-205; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

¹⁷ “Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips,” Pew Research Center, December 3, 2013, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/>; as the Pew Research Center reported: Currently, 52% say the United States “should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own.” Just 38% disagree with the statement. This is the most lopsided balance in favor of the U.S. “minding its own business” in the nearly 50-year history of the measure; *ibid*; see also Paul Lewis, “Most Americans think U.S. should ‘mind its own business’ abroad, survey finds,” *Guardian*, December 3, 2013, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/03/american-public-mind-its-own-business-survey>.

that would see the United States and its military less engaged in the world, not more.¹⁸ Decried by their critics as irresponsible ‘isolationists,’ these voices maintain that the United States is better served, and kept safe at far less cost, by a foreign and security policy of ‘non-interventionism,’ and ‘off-shore balancing.’¹⁹ Here, the failed interventions of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan serve as cautionary tale against illusions of American omnipotence, and the effectiveness of military power in world politics.

These insights into the political, academic and media landscape reveal how current debates about America’s role in the world, its potential decline, and the significance of its global leadership are centered on issues of American grand strategy: what it is, what it should be, and if the President of the United States has in fact formulated such a geopolitical vision to guide the country into the future, and orient the national interest. Grand strategy has been described as the ‘highest form of statecraft.’²⁰ A large segment of the foreign policy establishment in the United States, consisting of IR scholars, think tank experts, media pundits, diplomats, policymakers, and military professionals, sees grand strategy as an essential, intellectual prerequisite for the conduct of a successful foreign policy, and the production of national security.²¹

¹⁸ Barry R. Posen, *Restraint. A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Christopher A. Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Aaron Blake, “The Republican Party likes Rand Paul’s foreign policy — at least for now,” *Washington Post*, June 23, 2014, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/06/23/how-big-is-the-rand-paul-foreign-policy-wing-of-the-gop/>.

¹⁹ Stephen M. Walt, “Offshore balancing: An idea whose time has come,” *Foreign Policy*, November 2, 2011, accessed August 4, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/02/offshore_balancing_an_idea_whose_time_has_come; Christopher Layne, “The (Almost) Triumph of Offshore Balancing,” *National Interest*, January 27, 2012, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/almost-triumph-offshore-balancing-6405>; Daniel Larison, “Noninterventionism: A Primer,” *American Conservative*, June 11, 2014, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/noninterventionism-a-primer/>.

²⁰ Hal Brands, *What good is Grand Strategy?* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 1.

²¹ See for example, Patrick Doherty, “A New U.S. Grand Strategy,” January 9, 2013, accessed August 6, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/09/a_new_U.S._grand_strategy; Mr. Y, *A National Strategic*

Without a grand strategy in turn, the United States is expected to risk its dominant place in the world, inviting national decline and the unraveling of the liberal world order ‘America made’ after World War II.²² As one author in this rationalist-materialist discourse exemplary stated, without a grand strategy: “(...) the nation, its leaders, and people will experience a sense of drift and confusion.”²³

The lasting allure of grand strategy to its supporters is that it is supposed to clearly identify and prioritize external threats, allocate resources toward the pursuit of the national interest, and integrate a nation’s means of power into a coherent and consistent framework of thought and action. In this dominant materialist and positivist understanding, grand strategy exists as logical-rationalist calculation of means and ends, input and output. It is intrinsically linked to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of neoliberalism and neoliberalism and their conceptualization of power, hegemony, security and world order, which dominate academic discourses of International Relations and the formal expertise on national security and geopolitics in the United States.²⁴

Narrative (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2011); Shawn Brimley and Michèle A. Flournoy, eds, *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, (Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2008); Richard Fontaine and Kirstin M. Lord, eds, *America’s Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration* (Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012); Daniel W. Drezner, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011): pp. 57-67; “American Grand Strategy,” *Diplomat*, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/tag/american-grand-strategy/>; “American Grand Strategy,” Council on Foreign Relations, November 5, 2013, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/grand-strategy/american-grand-strategy/p31797>; Michael O’Hanlon, “How to Solve Obama’s Grand Strategy Dilemma,” Brookings, May 23, 2014, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/05/23-obama-grand-strategy-dilemma-ohanlon>; Anne-Marie Slaughter, “Does Obama have a grand strategy for his second term? If not, he could try one of these,” *Washington Post*, January 18, 2013, accessed June 2, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/does-obama-have-a-grand-strategy-for-his-second-term-if-not-he-could-try-one-of-these/2013/01/18/ec78cede-5f27-11e2-a389-ee565c81c565_story.html

²² Cf., William C. Martel, “Why America Needs a Grand Strategy,” *Diplomat*, July 18, 2012, accessed July 28, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/06/why-america-needs-a-grand-strategy/>.

²³ Martel, “America’s Grand Strategy Disaster.”

²⁴ On this subject, see in particular, Steve Smith, “The discipline of international relations: still an American social science?,” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2, no. 3 (2000): pp. 374–402; Ole Weaver, “The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations,” *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): pp. 687-727; Steve Smith, “The United States and the Discipline of International Relations: ‘Hegemonic Country, Hegemonic Discipline’,” *International*

To its critics, grand strategy represents an abstract, purely intellectual exercise for academic theorists and think tankers, without much practical use for policymaking, since the realities of world politics are too complex as to be subsumed under one coherent narrative.²⁵ While frequently described as vital prerequisite for America's continued success and necessary world leadership, the idealization of grand strategy, bordering on fetishization in certain academic and media circles, has occasionally met with mild ridicule. As the IR scholar Dan Drezner wryly remarked, every time a foreign policy expert devises a new grand strategy for the United States, in hopes of becoming the next George F. Kennan, 'an angel gets its wings.'²⁶ Again other critics, in particular realist IR scholars, do not question the premise of grand strategy per se, but see the United States pursue a dangerous and misguided strategic course of global hegemony and liberal imperialism that has overextended the country's resources, and produced global instability rather than national security.²⁷

Prominent policy makers and practitioners of U.S. national security and foreign policy have likewise questioned the actual, practical value of grand strategy. After having read the biographies of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, President Bill Clinton reportedly rejected the notion that grand strategy was a useful concept

Studies Review 4, no. 2 (2002): pp. 67-85. This intellectual dominance becomes all the more apparent when studying the various syllabi of grand strategy courses currently taught at leading American universities, see for example "The Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy and Studies in Grand Strategy Graduate Seminar," Yale University, accessed August 6, 2014, <http://iss.yale.edu/grand-strategy-program>; and "American Grand Strategy," Duke University, accessed August 8, 2014, <http://sites.duke.edu/agasp/>.

²⁵ Fareed Zakaria, "Stop searching for an Obama Doctrine," *Washington Post*, July 6, 2011, accessed August 5, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/stop-searching-for-an-obama-doctrine/2011/07/06/gIQAQMm11H_story.html; in the words of Zakaria: "The doctrinal approach to foreign policy doesn't make much sense anymore. [...] In today's multipolar, multilayered world, there is no central hinge upon which all American foreign policy rests. Policymaking looks more varied, and inconsistent, as regions require approaches that don't necessarily apply elsewhere;" *ibid*.

²⁶ Drezner, "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy," p. 61

²⁷ See for example John J. Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design," *National Interest*, December 16, 2010, accessed October 24, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/print/article/imperial-by-design-4576?page=1>; Christopher Layne, "The End of Pax Americana: How Western Decline Became Inevitable," *The Atlantic*, April 26, 2012, accessed October 24, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/the-end-of-pax-americana-how-western-decline-became-inevitable/256388/>; Posen, *Restraint*, pp. 24-69.

altogether. According to his former advisor Strobe Talbott: “Strategic coherence, he [Clinton] said, was largely imposed after the fact by scholars, memoirists and ‘the chattering classes’.”²⁸ And in January 2014 President Obama told a reporter of the *New Yorker* that he did not need any new grand strategy: “I don’t really even need George Kennan right now (...).”²⁹ What he rather needed, the President continued, were ‘the right partners.’³⁰

Obama’s and Drezner’s references to George F. Kennan illustrate how in the United States the Cold War period is predominantly seen as a time when the country pursued a coherent and consistent national grand strategy, -containment-, widely credited for winning the superpower confrontation with the Soviet Union, and securing an unprecedented American unipolarity in the international system. As one author has remarked: “This period was remarkable for the deep consensus in U.S. society and among our allies on the overall direction of our grand strategy.”³¹

Today, in American politics, academia and popular media, the concept of grand strategy continues to dominate the geopolitical imagination. A growing number of research papers, op-ed articles, popular books, university programs, public speeches and policy documents on the subject testify to its lasting allure. Yet, under President Obama American grand strategy is perhaps more controversially discussed than ever, revealing a widening rift within the foreign policy establishment, and between elites

²⁸ Quoted in Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 113.

²⁹ Quoted in David Remnick, “Going the Distance,” *New Yorker*, January 27, 2014, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-2?currentPage=all>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Martel, “Why America Needs a Grand Strategy.”

and the wider public about what America's role in the world should be. The consensus of grand strategy has fractured.

A critical research perspective of grand strategy

Conventionally understood, an American grand strategy envisions how the United States should best use its various means of power, - military, economic, political – to achieve its desired ends: national security, economic prosperity, and a liberal international order of free trade, great power peace, and the rule of law.³² Studies following such a conceptualization are mainly interested in measuring grand strategy in terms of input and output, success and failure.

Operating from a critical research perspective however, this thesis is concerned with the interlinkage of geopolitical identity, understood as a dominant representation of the role and position of the United States in world politics, and political practices in national security that reconstitute this identity. Hegemony, engagement and restraint in short are not just different, and essentially neutral tools for the application of American power in the world, but competing visions for 'America.'³³

³² For a range of definitions on grand strategy that follow this basic conceptualization, see for example Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Posen, *Restraint*; David S. McDonough, "Grand Strategy, Culture, and Strategic Choice: A Review," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 13, no. 4 (2011): pp. 1-33.

³³ In staying with the mainstay of U.S. discourses it investigates, the thesis uses the terms 'America' and 'United States' interchangeably. While this is done for stylistic purposes, and to authentically reproduce the discourse, the author is aware that this reflects a geopolitical imagination that is in itself an expression of hegemony, which equalizes U.S. identity with 'America,' ignoring the other 'Americans' of Central and South America.

Beyond the idea of grand strategy as calculation of material means and ends, lies an ideational dimension of fundamental convictions of truth about the nature of international order, the usefulness of military power, and the character of a nation, its history and purpose. Hence, the thesis moves the realm of vision and imagination into the center of attention. It examines the geopolitical reality hegemony, engagement and restraint describe, the historic narratives they employ, the identity constructs they rely on, and the political implications of their competing visions for America's role in the world. The study of grand strategy then is about the mindset that structures our thinking and orients political action.

Reflected in visions of grand strategy are competing worldviews of neoconservatism, realism, libertarianism, and liberalism, as well as notions of nationalism, militarism and imperialism that reveal the fundamental political nature of the construction and operation of knowledge in world politics. Grand strategy then, usually understood as rationalist blueprint for the use of material power and the allocation of resources, is in fact an expression of conviction about how the world works, and what a country's role in it should be. Grand strategy is a worldview.

A key assumption brought forward by the conventional literature is that grand strategy, in order to function must provide a coherent and consistent vision to align means and ends.³⁴ This assumes a reductionist logic that reduces the external complexity of international relations and geopolitics to a 'big picture' that prioritizes

³⁴ Cf., Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996/1997): pp. 5-53; Stephen D. Biddle, *American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005); Peter Feaver, "What is grand strategy and why do we need it?" *Foreign Policy*, April 8, 2009, accessed August 16, 2014, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/04/08/what_is_grand_strategy_and_why_do_we_need_it; Brands writes: "(...) a grand strategy is a purposeful and coherent set of ideas about what a nation seeks to accomplish in the world, and how it should go about doing so." Brands, p. 3;

threats, and provides a single-minded framework of reference to orient a government's actions in national security and foreign policy.

A critical research analysis of hegemony, engagement, and restraint is an investigation into the durability of geopolitical knowledge, and whether a trajectory of continuity or change can be established for the foreign and security policy of the Obama administration by looking at which American grand strategy has been dominant in providing the 'big picture,' and indeed if such a coherent and consistent vision of national security still exists in today's America. Beyond that, a critical perspective also re-politicizes grand strategy by reframing it from a neutral, scientific process of examination of material conditions, to a process of reality production, infused with political agendas, ideological convictions, and meta-theoretical dispositions.

The critical reconceptualization underling the research is that American grand strategy is manifest in a multitude of discourses, between popular culture, academic expertise, and political decision-making, which interlink representations of geopolitical identity, and practices of national security that confirm, but also contest a dominant worldview, resulting in competing geopolitical visions. If the established construct of geopolitical identity is contested by national security policies, this affects the political credibility of the dominant grand strategy discourse, which can no longer provide the narrative of national coherence and consistency it is supposed to perform.

Under Obama, 'American exceptionalism,' 'leading from behind,' and 'nation-building at home' all exist in a complex and uneasy compromise, simultaneously

confirming, reformulating, and contesting the established geopolitical identity of American leadership. In a puzzle to the conventional literature however, this does not actually signal the absence of grand strategy thinking so much as the presence of multiple grand strategies, which simultaneously inform national security policy. This in turn questions the significance of coherence and consistency, entailed in the conventional understanding of grand strategy.

Research question

The key issue then is not if the United States pursues the right or the wrong grand strategy, measurable in resources and outcomes, but how discourses of grand strategy structure the national debate on geopolitics and national security, and the political implications of this dominant discourse of identity construction. The question of grand strategy is a question of how ‘America’ thinks about itself, its role in the world, and how political actions confirm or contest this dominant self-conception. Hence, the primary research questions the thesis tries to answer is:

How did the Obama administration connect its national security policy to a geopolitical vision of America’s role and position in the world, and how did this reflect an American grand strategy?

Research statement

The aim of the research presented here is to make an original contribution to knowledge by examining the political significance of normative assumptions,

historic narratives, and geopolitical imaginations that are normally unspoken, or go unchecked, for the formulation of foreign and security policy. To paraphrase Rob Walker, the meaning of terms such as ‘security’, ‘strategy’, or ‘threat’ is mediated by complex cultural codes which strategic analysts are themselves only partly aware.³⁵ A discursive understanding of grand strategy addresses these ‘blind spots’ missed by the positivist literature.

To gain an understanding into the political implications of these ideational factors, the thoughts and actions that constitute a geopolitical vision of national security as a dominant worldview, is the interpretive value of discourses of grand strategy. This suggests that the central intellectual problem does not lie in what American grand strategy actually achieves, or is supposed to achieve in the minds of strategists, but rather in investigating how grand strategy functions as expression of a national construct of geopolitical identity that is interlinked with practices of national security.

To its proponents, grand strategy is an interpretive device for the understanding of external reality and the orientation of political action. Yet, at the same time, their visions of grand strategy create the very reality they seek to explain through them. To uncover how discourses of American grand strategy produce and reproduce the reality of national security and geopolitics they are devised to analyze is the critical inversion undertaken by the thesis.

³⁵ Cf., R.B.J. Walker “History and Structure in the Theory of International Relations,” in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, ed. James Der Derian (New York: New York University Press, 1995), p. 330.

Theoretical background

Operating from a Foucauldian understanding of power/knowledge in the construction of political and social reality, the thesis thereby integrates a critical, intertextual analysis of representations and practices of geopolitical identity and national security into a cross-discursive research design that moves beyond both the materialism and positivism of conventional research, and the textual bias of critical geopolitics.³⁶ A critical perspective allows the thesis to analyze grand strategy primarily through the spatial and temporal constructs of geopolitical imagination that are expressed in various discourses, and that establish it as dominant knowledge. In the words of Michael Shapiro:

A critical political perspective is [...] one that questions the privileged forms of representation whose dominance has led to the unproblematic acceptance of subjects, objects, acts, and themes through which the political world is constructed.³⁷

This locates the thesis theoretically and methodologically within a post-positivist research design that seeks an interpretive rather than an explanatory understanding of grand strategy. In its conceptualization of discourse, the thesis draws from literature in critical security studies, and in particular critical geopolitics. As explained by Gearóid Tuathail and John Agnew:

Geopolitics [...] should be critically re-conceptualized as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialize’ international politics in such a way as

³⁶ On power/knowledge, see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977*. (New York: Pantheon, 1977); for its conceptualization in the study of International Relations, see especially Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism & international relations: Bringing the political back in*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999), pp. 52-64. The key theoretical and methodological elements of critical geopolitics are presented in: Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, eds, *Rethinking Geopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 1998). For the problem of intertextuality and materiality in critical research and discourse analysis, see for example Tom Lundborg and Nick Vaughan-Williams, “New Materialisms, discourse analysis, and International Relations: a radical intertextual approach,” *Review of International Studies* (forthcoming 2015).

³⁷ Michael J. Shapiro, “Textualizing Global Politics,” in *International/Intertextual Relations*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (New York: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 13.

to represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples, and dramas.³⁸

In a similar vein David Campbell has redefined foreign policy as practice of security that is engaged in the writing and rewriting of identity through discourse, separating the American ‘Self’ from the threatening ‘Other.’³⁹ Grand strategy then should be understood as discursive practice that constructs the reality of national security and geopolitics by representing a spatialized American ‘Self’ against the non-American ‘Other’ in the rest of the world through a series of interlinked texts, produced by influential voices and elites, operating in various networks of power/knowledge.⁴⁰

However, beyond a strict focus on representations and the rules under which these representations gain leverage, legitimacy, and power, the thesis also considers the practices that materialize grand strategy and that are interlinked with the formulation of geopolitical identity. Here, box office results and sales figures of best selling books provide measures for mapping prevalent grand strategy discourses, and their performance in American popular culture. In the realm of formal expertise, the thesis considers the impact factor and influence rankings of IR journals, and Washington think tanks to map the most significant voices that provide intellectual expertise on American grand strategy.

Finally, in the discursive realms of U.S. defense planning and political decision-making, the materialism of the Pentagon budget and American military intervention

³⁸ Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, “Geopolitics and discourse: Practical geopolitical reasoning in American foreign policy,” *Political Geography* 11, no. 2 (1992): p. 192.

³⁹ David Campbell, *Writing Security* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, revised edition 1998).

⁴⁰ On the of significance of intertextuality, and the performance of national security discourses, see in particular: Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 55-73; Stuart Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), see also Jennifer Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no.2 (1999): pp. 225-254.

is closely integrated with representations of geopolitical identity that again point to the wider, practical implication of discourse, beyond the writing and re-writing of identity to address the dimension of political action. American grand strategy then is not only about textually defining who the United States is and what threats it faces, but also about the actions and processes through which an American worldview operates and becomes reality, from the production of Hollywood films to the staffing of top positions in defense bureaucracies in Washington DC.

Methodology

The thesis argues that American grand strategy is an ideational concept that provides the United States with a dominant understanding of the national self within a world-political context. This construction of geopolitical identity however cannot be the result of an isolated process of policy-decision making, or strategic defense planning if it is to successfully articulate the ‘national’ interest, and provide the ‘big picture’ for Americans to grasp. Hence, in order to map out the dominant discourse of grand strategy and its main contenders, the thesis will widen the scope of research beyond what is traditionally the content of grand strategy analysis, to include multiple sites of discursive production, from popular culture, to academic expertise and policy research, and political-practical decision-making. This offers a unique multidimensional, and carefully researched analysis into the mutual constitution of power and knowledge within and between discursive fields. This intertextual analysis explores in detail how dominant constructs of reality are built and rebuilt

through the interlinking of popular, formal, and practical discourses.⁴¹ The analytical conclusions of the thesis will thus be validated through a cross-discursive approach of intertextual analysis that combines six distinctive sites of discourse production, surveyed over a six-and-a-half year period between January 2009 and August 2014: The cinematic production of national security in top-grossing Hollywood movies; *New York Times* non-fiction best sellers on grand strategy and geopolitics; the formulation of grand strategy expertise in the top ranked American IR journal *Foreign Affairs*; the policy research on national security by seven of the most influential Washington think tanks; strategy and defense policy planning in the U.S. Department of Defense; and finally the formulation of a geopolitical vision of national security by President Barack Obama in official speeches, statements, and strategy documents.

The individual discursive sites chosen for analysis are further detailed at the beginning of each individual chapter in terms of source selection, discursive performance and intertextual position. Methodologically, the selection of sources has been concerned in particular with the representation of geopolitical identity and the linkage of these identity constructs to practices of national security in the context of power/knowledge, and the intertextual connections between them. The materiality of sales figures and impact rankings have been used in particular as criteria for a mapping of dominant popular and formal discourses. In the realm of popular culture,

⁴¹ A description of popular, formal, and practical geopolitics as different sites of the production, distribution and consumption of geopolitical discourses is provided by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, "Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics," in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, pp. 4-5; here practical geopolitics describes the discursive practices of 'state leaders and foreign policy bureaucracies,' formal geopolitics refers to the 'strategic community' and 'intellectuals of statecraft,' and popular geopolitics considers the 'artifacts of transnational, popular culture,' found in 'mass-market magazines, novels, or movies,' *ibid.*, p. 4. The thesis will loosely follow this basic categorization in its analysis of American grand strategy, examined in the separate but interrelated discursive fields of popular culture, academic expertise and policy research, and defense planning and policymaking.

the thesis examines highest grossing films and non-fiction best sellers in particular due to the wide spectrum of popular discourse and intertextuality they reflect, while they both combine entertainment and politics in creating popular visions of America's role in the world.

Here, the established Pentagon-Hollywood liaison, dating as far back as World War 2, works exemplary as discursive link that connects the sites of common sense knowledge and everyday experience and policy making. This extends to both the use of ideational constructs of identity and the practical aspect of cooperation. Hence, the thesis also considers how the Pentagon works with film productions in terms of equipment provided, going beyond only textual and representational issues. Non-fiction best sellers have been chosen in particular since these works bridge the realm of entertainment with the discursive sites of journalism and popular media, academic expertise, or policy making. Hence, it is the fusion of the status of expert or practitioner together with the popularity of the texts examined that makes these artifacts such a valuable source for intertextual examination.

The main consideration for selection has thus been popular-practical and popular-formal discursive connectivity, where other works in critical security studies and critical geopolitics such as Stuart Croft's *Culture Crisis and America's War on Terror* or François Debrix's *Tabloid Geopolitics* have featured a wider and deeper reading of culture and popularity. Croft for example has included TV shows, jokes, religion, billboard signs and many more aspects of American everyday experience in his reconstruction of the discursive intervention that led from 9/11 to the War on

Terror.⁴² Debrix on the other side has examined how the tabloid mediatization of fear, anxiety and insecurity has been the defining discursive feature in U.S. politics and foreign policy.⁴³ Yet, this thesis argues that it is less an all-encompassing cultural attitude or feature that dominates U.S. grand strategy discourse. Rather, it seems that in the interconnected and mutually co-constituting reality producing discursive sites of popular culture, academic expertise and policy-making geopolitical visions about America's role in the world are constantly competing with each other, but also within discursive sites in defining the 'big picture.'

As part of this cross-discursive and intertextual analysis, original research has also been undertaken by the author through a series of interviews in the United States. This field work has added a further critical dimension of data collection and interpretation to the intertextual analysis, interviewing individuals who as authors, experts and practitioners have been influential voices on American grand strategy under Obama, within and across discursive domains.⁴⁴

On the one hand, interviews were chosen in particular to examine how particular 'experts' in different discursive sites identified American grand strategy and how these views corresponded with their respective texts on the subject. With the experts that were successfully approached for an interview, interest was also on how, beyond

⁴² Cf., Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*, pp. 9-14.

⁴³ François Debrix, *Tabloid Terror. War, Culture and Geopolitics* (Abingdon and New York: 2008, Routledge), pp. 1-18.

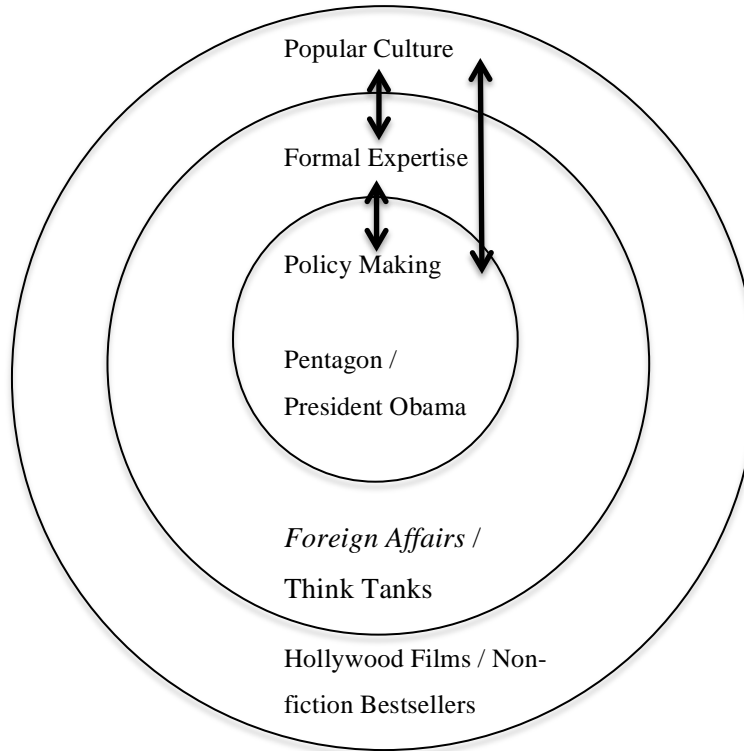
⁴⁴ Among the people interviewed for the thesis are the best-selling author and IR scholar Andrew Bacevich, the former staff member of the National Security Council (NSC) and current executive vice president and director of studies of the Center of a New American Security (CNAS) think tank Shawn Brimley, the former special assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Col. ret. Mark 'Puck' Mykleby, and Col. Greg Schultz, chairman of the Department of Strategy and Policy at the National War College (NWC) of the United States, located at the National Defense University (NDU). Furthermore, the respective directors of foreign and security policy research at the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Brookings Institute, Christopher Preble, Thomas Donnelly, and Michael O'Hanlon have been interviewed for the thesis.

their own ideas for American grand strategy, they assessed the Obama White House and its geopolitical vision for America. These expert interviews thus serve as supplementary sources for data collection and analysis that accompany the primary discourse analysis undertaken by the thesis. They have offered some valuable additional insights in this context. In particular noteworthy here are Shawn Brimley's comments and personal experience on the 'rotating door' connecting the White House, the Pentagon and think tanks, or Mark Mykleby's and Greg Schultz's elaboration on the military 'thinking' of grand strategy, and the many think tank experts that alluded to the Washington consensus of national security.

The research design presented here thus provides a comprehensive and rich scope of content data to explore, and depict the confirmation and contestation of geopolitical identity, the interlinkage of identity and national security, and the discursive performance and political significance of American grand strategy under the Obama presidency.

Figure 1. Model of discourse analysis

Intertextual links



Chapter outline

In terms of the thesis structure, chapter one will first provide a detailed introduction into the concepts of grand strategy and geopolitics, and their conventional conceptualization in IR literature. This is juxtaposed with the main theoretical and methodological perspectives developed by the literature in critical security studies and critical geopolitics, which have provided the principle framework for the discourse analysis based research design. A special focus lies on a detailed exploration of the key critical concepts of power/knowledge, discourse, intertextuality, and identity the thesis has applied to the study of American grand strategy under the Obama presidency.

In chapters two and three, the thesis will focus on popular culture as site for the production of dominant geopolitical knowledge and conventional wisdom, examining Hollywood films that feature themes of national security (chapter 2), and popular non-fiction books on grand strategy and geopolitics, featured on the *New York Times* best sellers list (chapter 3). Here, the thesis focuses on the cultural construction of a geopolitical identity of American leadership, military supremacy and national exceptionalism, and how popular representations confirm or contest this construct of the American 'Self' in the context of national security and world politics.

A critical textual analysis and deconstructive reading of popular representations and narratives located with Hollywood movies and *New York Times* bestsellers allows the thesis to create a basic categorization of U.S. grand strategy discourses from the 'ground up'.⁴⁵ This approach to discourse analysis inverts the one undertaken for example by Lena Hansen.⁴⁶ Rather than using popular culture to intertextually link up to representations of identity already established through the analysis of political and media discourses, the 'everyday' of popular culture serves as discursive location to map out and identify the key themes, representations and narratives of national security and geopolitics in the popular imagination.

Together with the 'national security cinema' and its regular reproduction of a popular geopolitical imagination of American exceptionalism, heroism, and militarism in films such as *Battleship* and *Act of Valor*, works like Kagan's *The World America*

⁴⁵ Cf., Milliken, p. 234.

⁴⁶ Cf., Hansen, pp. 59-64.

Made, Zbigniew Brzezinski's *Strategic Vision*, and Andrew Bacevich's *Washington Rules* appear as exemplary voices that defend, reformulate, or negate a hegemonic identity of American leadership in basic grand strategy discourses of hegemony, engagement and restraint.

From the mapping of basic grand strategy discourses in the popular realm, the analysis then continues through more formal modes of discourse. In chapters four and five the thesis will analyze the realm of academic debate and policy research that provides the dominant intellectual expertise on issues of grand strategy and national security within the American foreign policy establishment. Here, the thesis first engages in a comprehensive analysis of the grand strategy debate contained in the pages of *Foreign Affairs* (chapter 4), which represents a leading elite publication that bridges the presentation and debate of scholarly research and the policy oriented writing of experts and political practitioners. Chapter four also introduces the concept of 'hybrid discourses' of hegemonic engagement and hegemonic restraint, which reproduce the dominant representation of a geopolitical identity of American leadership, exceptionalism, and military supremacy, while articulating practices that partially reformulate, and negate this hegemonic role, such as the liberal concept of 'deep engagement,' and realist concepts of 'offshore balancing'.

In chapter five, the thesis will investigate the grand strategy proposals by some of the leading think tanks operating in Washington DC, demonstrating how their nominally impartial, and independent research reveals a dominant, bipartisan neoconservative/liberal-internationalist consensus of hegemony that further

underlines the intertextual, and practical interconnection between, research expertise, professional knowledge, and policymaking.

Finally, the analysis will investigate the center of political-practical discourses of grand strategy, national security and defense policy planning located with the U.S. Department of Defense (chapter 6) and President Barack Obama (chapter 7), who functions as supreme architect of grand strategy and main representative of U.S. national security and foreign policy. Here, the thesis will examine how constructs of geopolitical identity, and basic and hybrid discourses of grand strategy that have been established through the previous mapping of popular and formal discourses, are translated into political practices and the formulation of a strategic vision of national security, as for example in the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Review*, the *Strategic Defense Guidance*, or the President's State of the Union addresses.

From this critical analysis of American grand strategy, President Obama emerges as a political leader, who has connected its basic, discursive strands of hegemony, engagement and restraint into a multidimensional, and inherently conflicted geopolitical vision of national security. Under Obama there is an unresolved tension between the dominant, cross-discursive and intertextually constructed geopolitical vision of American leadership, where the 'indispensable nation' is a fixture of conventional wisdom, academic expertise, and political-practical reasoning, and a national security policy of engagement and restraint concerned with 'burden sharing' and 'nation-building at home.' So far, a grand strategy of 'leading from behind' has failed to resolve this tension, and could not forge a new consensus on America's role in the world.

1. Reimagining grand strategy – From Clausewitz to critical geopolitics

The basic idea of grand strategy is that it functions as a guideline for the national interest. It is supposed to provide an answer to the question about a country's role in the world, and to dedicate a nation's power and resources toward achieving the goals the strategy sets out.⁴⁷ There is a substantial amount of literature in International Relations research built around this dominant understanding of grand strategy, and how it orients military power toward the goal of national security, predominantly in great power case studies and comparative analyses, largely based on realist/neorealist theoretical assumptions on structural anarchy and power distribution as explanation for grand strategy.⁴⁸ Liberal institutionalism and social constructivism have provided

⁴⁷ See for example: Colin Dueck, "Realism, Culture and Grand Strategy: Explaining America's Peculiar Path to World Power," *Security Studies* 14, no. 2, (2005): pp. 195-231; Shawn Brimley and Michelle Flournoy state that: "A new grand strategy should therefore answer fundamental questions about 'America's core national interest' and 'the purpose of American power'." Shawn Brimley and Michèle A. Flournoy, "Introduction," in *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, p. 5; Posen explains: "A grand strategy is a nation state's theory about how to produce security for itself." Posen, *Restraint*, p. 1. Robert J. Art maintains: "A grand strategy tells a nation's leaders what goals they should aim for and how best they can use their country's military power to attain these goals." Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*, p. 1; Michael C. Desch sees grand strategy as a more general concept addressing various issues concerning the strategic position of a state and its national interest: "Grand strategy encompasses a wide variety of important questions. [...] What are a state's strategic interests and how should it rank them in importance. [...] How should states reconcile limited national resources with competing external interests?" Michael C. Desch, "The Keys that lock up the World," *International Security* 14, no. 1 (1989), p. 86; Avery Goldstein states: "It is labeled 'grand' because it refers to the guiding logic or overarching vision about how a country's leaders combine a broad range of capabilities linked with military, economic, and diplomatic strategies to pursue international goals." Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 19. In contemporary International Relations literature the definition of the term 'grand strategy' generally follows the rationalist means-ends logic, while variations exist, most definitions stress the long-term planning of national security as the end, and military and economic power as the means of grand strategy. For further definitions of grand strategy and the equivalent term 'grand design', see among others John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1973); and Robert J. Art, "A Defensible Defence: America's Grand Strategy," *International Security* 15, no. 4 (1991): pp. 5-53.

⁴⁸ Examples for neorealist perspectives on grand strategy include: John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001); Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*; Robert J. Art (ed.) *America's Grand Strategy and World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*; Christopher Layne, *Peace of Illusion: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). A variety of great power case studies have examined individual grand strategies of the United States, Russia, China and Japan, including their continuity or change over time, cf. Brands; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, Layne, *Peace of Illusions*; Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983); Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*; Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). Further historical analyses of grand strategy have included the Roman and Byzantine Empire, the Ming Dynasty in Imperial China, and the great powers in World War I and World War II, cf., Edward Luttwak, *The grand strategy of the Roman Empire from the first century AD to the third* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

alternative perspectives that have stressed the domestic impact on grand strategy by cultural, political and economic factors rather than the external pressure of the international system.⁴⁹ Numerous neoclassical realist studies of grand strategy have lately attempted to fuse both perspectives by using domestically constituted cultural variables to fine-tune the analysis of grand strategy outcomes.⁵⁰ However, by committing to a positivist epistemology and ontology, the conventional IR literature on grand strategy has omitted issues of identity, narrative and discourse, which from a critical research perspective are essential components for understanding the construction of intellectual concepts such as ‘national security,’ and ‘geopolitics’ as political and social reality.

Part I Grand strategy

Strategy and grand strategy

Charles Hill in his fascinating account of classical literature’s insight into International Relations writes: “Literature lives in the realm grand strategy requires, beyond rational calculation, in acts of the imagination.”⁵¹ In a similar vein, Lawrence Freedman, who produced a seminal work on the history of strategy as an intellectual

2009); Arthur Ferrill, *Roman imperial grand strategy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991); Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Samuel R. Williamson Jr., *The politics of grand strategy: Britain and France prepare for war, 1904-1914* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969); *Grand Strategy* (Multiple Volumes): N. H. Gibbs, *Volume 1: Rearmament Policy* (London: HMSO, 1976); J. R. M. Butler, *Volume 2: September 1939 - June 1941* (London: HMSO, 1957); J. M. A. Gwyer, *Volume 3, part 1: June 1941 - August 1942*. (London: HMSO, 1964); J. R. M. Butler, *Volume 3, part 2: June 1941 - August 1942* (London: HMSO, 1961); Michael Howard, *Volume 4: September 1942 - August 1943* (London: HMSO, 1970); John Ehrman, *Volume 5: August 1943 - September 1944* (London: HMSO, 1956); John Ehrman, *Volume 6: October 1944 - August 1945* (London: HMSO, 1956).

⁴⁹ For a neoliberal reading of grand strategy, see: John G. Ikenberry, “American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror,” *Survival* 43, no. 4 (2001): pp. 19-34. In constructivism an exemplary study has been: Johnston, *Cultural Realism*; see also, Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, eds, *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ Neoclassical realist analyses of grand strategy have been included: Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*; Layne, *Peace of Illusions*; Samuels, *Securing Japan*; and Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*.

⁵¹ Charles Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 6.

concept, pointed to the central importance of communication and narratives in the operation of strategy. He defined strategy as: “(...) a story about power told in the future tense from the perspective of a leading character.”⁵² These interpretations of the concept of strategy demonstrate how a reconceptualization of grand strategy as product of discourse and formation of power/knowledge reflects a wider interest in the social sciences to open up debates about state behavior beyond the rigidities of positivism and rationalism, to include the realms of imagination, beliefs, and identities.⁵³

The original idea of grand strategy as a higher level of strategic planning goes back to the writings of British and American military thinkers and scholars of foreign relations, notably J.F.C. Fuller, Edward Mead Earle, and Basil Liddell Hart, and gained prominence in the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁴ Hart described the role of grand strategy as “(...) to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined by fundamental policy.”⁵⁵ While still mainly concerned with the Clausewitzian definition of strategy, and achieving victory in war, Hart had made an important step

⁵² Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A history* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 609.

⁵³ Carl von Clausewitz, one of the most profound thinkers about strategy and war likewise insisted that the proper understanding of strategy required the appreciation of human experience, creativity and intuition. Strategy for Clausewitz was never just a rational calculation of power and material capabilities, but about what goes on inside the mind, the ‘coup d’oeil,’ and how humans perceive their environment and react to it, cf. Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2005, originally published 1832/1834), pp. 205-298. Clausewitz, who famously described war as the continuation of politics by other means, also provided a lasting definition of strategy that has been immensely influential and is widely quoted in scientific literature through this day. See for example the definitions of strategy in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, p. viii and Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially pp. 17-23. See also Gray’s introduction to *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), in itself an entire book devoted to the elaboration of Clausewitz for the study of strategic theory, where the author praises Clausewitz and *On War* as the ‘outstanding intellectual guide’ to the understanding of strategy; Gray, *Strategy Bridge*, p. 4. According to Clausewitz strategy is defined by its means and its purpose, as the ‘use of battlefield engagements’ for the ‘purpose of war.’ Clausewitz, p. 113. [Translated by the author]. For Clausewitz the purpose of war is to enforce one’s will over the opponent, to achieve the ultimate goal of a victorious peace. The ultimate goal of strategy is therefore a political outcome, not just military victory on the battlefield; see *ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

⁵⁴ Brands, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Basil Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), pp. 335-336.

towards the refinement of grand strategy by including military and non-military sources of power.⁵⁶ Grand strategy was more than the use of tactical engagements on the battlefield by politicians and generals; it was the use of national power in total and should take into account the broader national interest for peace after war. Ultimately, the understanding of grand strategy would move beyond the sole purpose of war. As Earle explained:

The highest type of strategy – sometimes called grand strategy – is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory.⁵⁷

Over time, grand strategy had come to define the planning and usage of a nation's power for national security.⁵⁸ Based on different ideal type scenarios of how a state can employ its power to achieve security in the international system, the respective IR literature provides a categorization of grand strategy, listing the various strategic choices available to the United States, which dominates as the research subject of

⁵⁶ According to Hart, grand strategy “(...) should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will;” Hart, p. 336; Hart was ultimately concerned with the meaning of victory and peace as the result of war and criticized the narrow focus on military power in the United Kingdom's strategy in World War I, which for him lead to senseless human sacrifice, as in the battle of the Somme, and to political ‘overcommitment’ and economic exhaustion, cf. Paul Kennedy, *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press: 1991), p. 3. As Kennedy paraphrased Hart's thinking: “The British strategy of 1914-1918 (...), because it cost too much, meant that the nation and its people were not better off in ‘victory’ than they had been previously,” *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Edward Mead Earle, ed, *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. viii.

⁵⁸ The term ‘national security’ in this context refers to its traditional conceptualization, concerned predominantly with the use of military power for countering existential threats, preserving the territorial integrity of the nation and guaranteeing the autonomy of action of political decision-makers by allowing them to operate free from outside coercion, cf. traditional definitions in Barry Buzan, *Peoples, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1983), pp. 16-17. As the thesis will elaborate in the subsequent chapters, in the discourse of American grand strategy, ‘national security’ is constructed around a more expansive geopolitical vision that includes for example, the maintenance of a liberal, international order under U.S. stewardship as vital security interest of the United States. As with ‘national security,’ ‘power’ in these grand strategy categorizations follows a traditional understanding as: “(...) the ability to effect the outcomes you want and, if necessary, to change the behavior of others to make this happen.” Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 4. The means of grand strategy can include, both traditional ‘hard power’ capabilities (the threat or use of military force and economic reward or pressure) to pressure and coerce others, and ‘soft power’, the attractiveness of values, ideas, and practices to influence events through persuasion and attraction, for example mediated through cultural diplomacy, international institutions or popular entertainment, on hard vs. soft power see Joseph Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004). Colin S. Gray essentially disputes the value of soft power for strategy and advocates the pre-eminence of military power, Colin S. Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011).

interest.⁵⁹ These ideal type scenarios, evaluating various options of strategic choice available to rational actors, reveal the dominant materialist understanding of grand strategy in International Relations. The end (national security, peace, prosperity) stays consistent over time, it is how coercively, cooperatively or passively means of power (predominantly military force) are used towards this end that define grand strategy.

Grand strategy in International Relations: Realists vs. the rest

The contemporary and historical interest in grand strategy has traditionally been tied to states that were, or are considered great powers.⁶⁰ This emphasis on power also explains the original dominance of realist and neorealist theories of international relations in the study of grand strategy. “Perhaps the most pervasive assumptions underlying contemporary strategy are those which are associated with the theory of political behavior known as ‘realism’,” as John Garnett has explained.⁶¹

Following the basic conceptualization of neorealism, laid down by Kenneth Waltz, states are functionally identical actors, only differentiated by the distribution of

⁵⁹ Henry C. Bartlett and G. Paul Holman for example suggest three possible alternatives for American grand strategy: Disengagement, global leadership, and balance of power. Henry C. Bartlett and Paul G. Holman, “Grand Strategy and the Structure of U.S. Military Forces,” *Strategic Review* (Spring 1992): p. 48. Art identifies seven possible variations for a grand strategy: Dominion, global collective security, regional collective security, cooperative security, containment, isolationism, and selective engagement. Robert J. Art, “Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement,” *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 79-113. Posen and Andre L. Ross suggest four main categories of grand strategy: Neo-isolationism, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy. Posen and Ross, p. 6.

⁶⁰ In focusing on the United States this study will be following the same great power centric approach, acknowledging that the political and academic significance of American grand strategy and its potentially immense effect on world affairs cannot be understood without the material resources the United States can employ to realize its geostrategic vision. However, it is the perception of U.S. power in American grand strategy discourse and its ideational contextualization, rather than its structural, material dimension that is of interest to the author.

⁶¹ John Garnett, “Strategic Studies and its assumptions,” in *Contemporary Strategy*, ed. John Baylis et al. (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p. 9.

power among them, sharing the ultimate goal to guarantee their survival. Operating under the structural anarchy of the international system they try to maximize their security by maintaining a favorable balance of power, which in a zero-sum game brings them into constant competition with each other.⁶² John Mearsheimer went beyond Waltz's more defensive articulation of structural realism, stating that states seek to maximize their relative power at the expense of others.⁶³ For offensive realism every great power ultimately pursues a grand strategy of regional hegemony; to become so powerful that it becomes unassailable by the remaining competitors in the international system.⁶⁴ For realists, military power is the key determinant of grand strategy.⁶⁵

The neorealist model while highly influential has been widely criticized as too static and deterministic to allow for variation in grand strategy choices, and to be too inconsistent with developments after the end of the Cold War.⁶⁶ Lately, the realist analysis of grand strategy has turned to neoclassical realism as an alternative that maintains a commitment to the centrality of material power and external pressure, while it includes an additional input of cultural influences and domestic politics.⁶⁷ In this view, neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism can serve as supplements to the basic neorealist assumptions underlying International Relations.⁶⁸ To neoclassical

⁶² Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

⁶³ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 21; p. 40. Waltz himself has stressed that his theory is not there to explain individual foreign policy outcomes, like a particular grand strategy choice, but the structure of the international system, see for example Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 58.

⁶⁵ See for example, Art, *America's Grand Strategy*; Posen, *Restraint*.

⁶⁶ Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, "Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy", in *Domestic Bases of Grand Strategies*, pp. 3-21.

⁶⁷ In the case of the United States the best examples are Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders* and Layne, *Peace of Illusions*. Classical realism of course has always considered cultural and ideational factors, such as man's lust for power, rooted in human nature, cf. Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 8.

⁶⁸ Neoclassical realism is eager to maintain the theoretical rigor and 'elegance' of Waltz's model, using domestic influences as intervening variables to focus on individual policy outcomes and behavior, cf. Gideon Rose,

realists grand strategy is still fundamentally about power, security and survival and defined by means and ends, but within this context strategic choice is also influenced by economic and cultural variables that allow for different perceptions of and preferences for a particular grand strategy. “From a neoclassical realist perspective, cultural factors can help to specify and explain the final choices made by foreign policymakers.”⁶⁹

Colin Dueck employs neoclassical realism in his study of American grand strategy, demonstrating how classical liberal assumptions and a historical preference for limited liability in strategic affairs are two persistent features of strategic culture that help explain the strategic adjustment of the United States after the two World Wars and the end of the Cold War.⁷⁰ The result, according to Dueck, is a grand strategy of liberal internationalist goals and limited means, resulting in a continuous gap of capabilities and commitments.⁷¹

Christopher Layne arrives at quite the contrary result, when he states that the grand strategy of the United States has been marked by an on-going quest for extra-regional hegemony, not constrained by a cultural inclination towards limited means, but rather following a domestically based ideological and economic logic of

“Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): pp. 144-172. Such a move is at the same time heavily criticized for essentially filling the gaps of structural realism with theoretical perspectives that are fundamentally opposed to realism’s basic premises, see Jeffrey Lego and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist”, *International Security* 42, no. 2 (1999): pp. 5-55.

⁶⁹ Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, p. 19.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 21. Dueck does not question the basic premise of the means-ends chain, defining grand strategy as “(...) a self-conscious identification and prioritization of foreign policy goals, an identification of existing and potential resources, and a selection of a plan which uses these resources to meet those goals.” Dueck, “Realism, Culture and Grand Strategy: Explaining America’s Peculiar Path to World Power,” p. 198.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 146.

expansionism, symbolized in the 'Open Door' policy towards China.⁷² The goal of American grand strategy is therefore: "(...) an international system, or 'world order', made up of states that are open and subscribe to the United States' liberal values and institutions and that are open to U.S. economic penetration."⁷³ These two diametrically opposed readings nonetheless agree in one key aspect: American grand strategy is not just the maintenance of a narrowly defined national security through military force, but the universalism of American liberalism and the global, geopolitical context of America's power make its grand strategy a vision of world order, based on American cultural values and political and economic interests.

While realism remains the main contender in IR for explaining grand strategy, international political economy, neoliberalism, and social constructivism have brought forward economic, institutional and cultural explanations that do not subscribe to the realist view of strategy. Kevin Narizny for example has produced an analysis of British and American strategic choices in the 19th and 20th century that interprets grand strategy as the product of the economic interests of influential domestic groups, with their position on grand strategy following from their involvement with the world economy.⁷⁴

Neoliberalism which, contrary to realism's conflict-centric outlook, focuses on international cooperation as a result of political values, economic interdependence

⁷² Layne, *Peace of Illusion*, pp. 28-36. The argument of the Open Door as expansionist and imperialist American strategy has been mainly developed by the critical historian William Appelman to which Layne directly refers here, see William Appelman, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972).

⁷³ Ibid., p. 30

⁷⁴ Kevin Narizny, *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2007), Narizny defines grand strategy as "general principles by which an executive decision maker or decision making body pursues its international goals", *ibid.* pp. 8-9. Grand strategy is furthermore a multi-dimensional concept varying in the level of activity (assertiveness), the level of area (periphery vs. great powers) and the level of coercion (use of force), *ibid.* pp. 10-15. Ultimately, strategy is about "means, not ends." *Ibid.* p. 9.

and institutional order lets scholars like G. John Ikenberry emphasize the self-binding, trust-building and stabilizing effects of American grand strategy in the Cold War and post-Cold War order.⁷⁵ Grand strategy here is first and foremost understood as the *Pax Britannica* of the 19th and the *Pax Americana* of the 20th century, providing the common goods of open seas, free trade, international order and security.⁷⁶ The United States thus appears as the ‘liberal leviathan’ of the international order, hegemonic, but benevolent.⁷⁷

Where pessimistic neorealism and optimistic neoliberalism agree is that the material world exists independent from human interaction and that political decisions depend on cost-benefit analyses undertaken by rational actors, which makes grand strategy the product of structural constraints and rational choice.⁷⁸ Constructivism challenges this view by arguing that our world is socially constructed and that norms, ideas, identities and culture have a profound impact on international relations and the behavior of states.⁷⁹ As Alexander Wendt famously put it: “Anarchy is what states

⁷⁵ Cf., Ikenberry, “American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror.” The basic principles of neoliberalism (liberal institutionalism) are laid out in Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); see also John G. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁷⁶ Among the substantial literature of this theme, some prominent articles include: Michael Ignatieff, “American Empire – The Burden,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003; Charles A. Kupchan, “After Pax Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity,” *International Security* 23, no. 2 (1998): pp. 40-79; John G. Ikenberry, “American power and the empire of capitalist democracy,” *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 5 (2001): pp. 191-212; Geir Lundestad, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-195,” *Journal of Peace Research* 23, no. 3 (1986): pp. 263-277; a realist notion of the same argument is made by John Kagan, “Benevolent Empire,” *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1998), pp. 24-35. The British historian Niall Fergusson is an especially outspoken advocate of the virtues of American empire in world affairs, cf., Niall Fergusson, *Colossus - The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

⁷⁷ G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). According to Ikenberry: “The United States took on the duties of building and running an international order, organizing it around multilateral institutions, alliances, special relationships, and client states. It was hierarchical political order with liberal characteristics,” *ibid.*, p. xi.

⁷⁸ On the common assumptions of both theories, see Robert Powell, “Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate,” *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994): pp. 313-344.

⁷⁹ A synopsis and post-structuralist critique of the key positions of mainstream constructivism as represented by Alexander Wendt (interests and identities), Friedrich Kratochwil (rules and norms), and Nicholas Onuf (speech acts and rule) is provided by Maja Zehfuss, *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*

make of it.”⁸⁰ This perspective came to be increasingly popular in the study of grand strategy because it opened up a new ontological dimension concerning national security, as for example expressed by Richard Samuels: “(...) grand strategies serve as mirrors of national identity and communal longing; they are best built on a platform of ideas about a nation’s place in history and its people’s future.”⁸¹

At the same time, mainstream constructivism still maintains a firm commitment to the positivist epistemology and independent/dependent variable empiricist model that many IR researchers, particular in the United States, deem essential for making valid statements on social reality and political outcomes. This allowed researchers to claim a ‘middle ground’ without having to resort to ‘some exotic (presumably Parisian) social theory,’ in the words of Peter Katzenstein.⁸² A comment aimed at the supposed lack of methodological rigor and explanatory value of critical and post-structural research designs.⁸³

Maybe the most significant contribution to the study of grand strategy coming from conventional constructivism has been the development of ‘strategic culture’ as an

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For an overview of the research in conventional constructivism on national security, see Peter J. Katzenstein, ed, *The Culture of National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁸⁰ Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is what States make of it,” *International Security* 20, no.1, (1992): pp. 391-425.

⁸¹ Samuels, *Securing Japan*, p. 4.

⁸² Peter J. Katzenstein et al. “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security”, in *The Culture of National Security*, p. 34. On the ontological middle position of constructivism between structuralism/materialism and critical theory/post-structuralism, see Emanuel Adler, “Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): pp. 319-363. Positivists, like Keohane, Katzenstein, and Walt question the premise of critical constructivism/post-structuralism for the study of national security and International Relations, due to the latter’s skepticism towards the possibility of scientifically measuring ‘reality,’ and its rejection of a strict dichotic view of social and material reality, see for example Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane and Stephen D. Krasner “International Organization and the Study of World Politics,” *International Organization* 52, no. 2 (1998): pp. 645–685; and Hansen, p. xviii.

⁸³ For a range of essays representing an overview of postmodern or critical constructivism in the study of security see for example: Jutta Weldes and others, eds, *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

analytical tool.⁸⁴ For Colin S. Gray, who is among the leading members of the ‘first generation’ of strategic culture scholars, strategic culture provides the context of ideas and behavior, constituting a particular national style in strategy.⁸⁵ Grand strategy then appears still as equation of means and ends but strategic culture concedes that strategists don’t operate in a vacuum or a ‘black box,’ but are human beings that are socialized in a particular historical, geographical, social and political context. “Americans are what their interpretation of their history and their contemporary role has made them,” in the words of Gray.⁸⁶ However, for the most part the strategic culture literature remains committed to a constructivist notion of social context that exists parallel, and independent from non-constructed elements, such as domestic and external constraints of behavior.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ The term was originally coined by Jack Snyder in 1977, when he claimed that Soviet nuclear strategy would not necessarily have to mirror U.S. strategic assumptions concerning deterrence, since the Soviet Union had undergone a different historic experience and possessed a different political and military culture. Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1977). As Snyder explained: “[...] as a result of this socialization process, a set of general beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns with regard to nuclear strategy has achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of ‘culture’ rather than mere policy;” *ibid.*, p. v.

⁸⁵ Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); see also Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (London: Hamilton Press: 1986). To Gray: “Strategic Culture is not only ‘out there’, it is also within us; we, our institutions, and our behavior are in the context;” Colin S. Gray, “Strategic culture as context: the first generation strikes back,” *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): pp. 49-69, p. 53. Alastair Ian Johnston classified strategic culture research into three generations represented among others by Colin S. Gray (1st), Bradley Klein (2nd) and himself (3rd), see Alastair Ian Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): pp. 32-64. In terms of grand strategy, Gray refers to it as an ‘instrument,’ which is employed due to cultural preferences, as derived from by strategic culture, a similar position to the one taken by neo-classical realism, for example in the works of Dueck and Layne.

⁸⁶ Gray, *Nuclear Strategy*, p. 58.

⁸⁷ Cf., *ibid.*, p. 150. For Gray culture is only one of seventeen (!) dimensions that make up strategy. The ‘third generation’ is even closer to the positivist orthodoxy of international relations, most prominently represented by Alastair Ian Johnston who operationalizes culture as an independent variable separate from behavior and testable against non-cultural causes of policy outcomes, in order to demonstrate how strategic culture ranks grand strategy preferences. According to Johnston his methodology was designed to move strategic culture beyond the determinism and tautology plaguing the first generation’s research efforts, as represented by Snyder and Gray, see Johnston, “Thinking about Strategic Culture,” pp. 36-39. Johnston has developed this positivist approach in his study of the strategic culture and grand strategy of the Ming-Dynasty of China, where he identified two existing strategic cultures, one mainly ideational, drawing from Confucianism and preferring defensive strategies, and one mainly practical, inspired by realpolitik considerations and stressing offensive strategies, see Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, pp. 248-266. Among Johnston’s most outspoken critics is Gray who takes the most serious issue with Johnston separating culture from behavior, charging him with missing the essential point of culture as defining context of human thought and action, see Colin S. Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back.” On the Gray/Johnston debate see also, Stuart Poole, “What is the context? A reply to the Gray-Johnston debate on strategic culture,” *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): pp. 279-284. The literature on strategic culture, while predominantly operating within a positivist epistemology, represents a significant evolution from the conventional understanding of grand strategy by moving beyond a positivist ontology that only considers material factors relevant to research. Gray for example stresses the

Considering the existing grand strategy literature then, a research perspective based on critical security studies and critical geopolitics provides a reconceptualization of the subject, beyond an exclusive material focus on military power and national security, and a positivist epistemology.⁸⁸

A critical security studies perspective of grand strategy: Power/knowledge, discourse and intertextuality

Critical security studies is a research field that seeks to deepen and broaden the understanding of security, - conventionally understood as the absence of threat, - to include non-military dimensions of security and the political and social processes of securitization.⁸⁹ Drawing from multiple disciplines in the humanities and the social

significance of context, as historical and geographical experience that influences strategic thinking and practice, a theme taken up by Oliver Lee who summarizes: "(...) a nation's strategic culture as it exists in any given era [...] results from the interaction of the nations' perception of its geopolitical potential [...] with the nation's assessment of the international environment." Oliver M. Lee, "The Geopolitics of America's Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 3 (2008): p. 268. Here, the concept of strategic culture blends over into the intellectual realm of critical geopolitics and the idea of geopolitical culture and geopolitical identity as presented by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, who define 'geopolitical culture' as comprised of the interlinked discursive fields of popular, formal, and practical geopolitics, cf., Ó Tuathail and Dalby, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, pp. 4-5.

⁸⁸ Such a conceptual reinterpretation is also in line with a renewed interest in moving beyond the Gray-Johnston debate to incorporate critical theory, post-structuralism and discourse analysis into the study of strategic culture and grand strategy. Here, Edward Lock takes a special interest in the work by Bradley Klein and the 'second generation' of strategic culture researchers, cf., Edward Lock, "Refining strategic culture: return of the second generation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): pp. 685-708; see also Iver B. Neumann and Henrikki Heikka, "Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practise: The Social roots of Nordic Defence," *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 5 (2005): pp. 5-23. Klein draws from post-structuralism and post-Marxist critical theory, notably Gramsci, presenting strategic culture as expression of cultural hegemony, constituted through discourse: "(...) strategic culture is more than mere military style, for it emerges from an infrastructure of technology and an armaments sector. Most importantly, it is based upon the political ideologies of public discourse that help define occasions as worthy of military involvement." Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," *Review of International Studies* 14 (1988): pp. 1-44. See also Bradley S. Klein, "The Textual Strategies of the Military: Have You Read Any Good Defense Manuals Lately?," in *International/Intertextual Relations*, pp. 97-112.

⁸⁹ On the multiple perspectives, informed by critical theory and the Frankfurt School, post-structuralism and 'postmodernism', that are collected under the label 'critical security studies', see Stuart Croft and Terry Terriff, eds, *Critical Reflections on Security and Change* (Oxon, New York: Frank Cass, 2005); Columba Peoples and Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2010); Ken Booth, ed, *Critical Security Studies and World Politics* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner, 2005); Richard Wyn Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory* (Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner, 1999). Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds, *Critical Security Studies: Concepts And Strategies* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997). Critical Security Studies (CSS) is a distinctive category within the field mainly informed by critical theory. Critical theory in its most general definition is concerned with emancipation as the possibility for change

sciences, a main concern is to examine deep-seated assumptions about security and the nature of conflict beyond the state-centrism and parochialism of traditional security studies and International Relations theory. Here, critical theory and post-structuralism provide two distinctive, philosophically informed avenues of critical inquiry.⁹⁰ While ‘critical security studies’ is a broad label that encompasses a multitude of analytical perspectives, research agendas, and methodologies, the thesis is mainly concerned with its post-structural strand. As such its understanding of critique follows Foucault in that:

(...) critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth.⁹¹

Post-structuralism shares critical theory’s skepticism towards Cartesian perspectivalism, rationalist epistemology and empiricist methodology, yet it does not explicitly pursue an overarching emancipatory agenda. Highly critical of any meta-perspective, post-structural approaches in International Relations are mainly inspired by the writings of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, seeking:

(...) to examine in detail how the world comes to be seen and thought of in particular ways at specific historical junctures and to study how particular social practices (...) work in terms of the relations of power and the ways of thinking that such practices produce or support.⁹²

to contribute to the improvement of human conditions. It questions materialism, structuralism and determinism and centers on the meaning and conditions of human freedom. It is inspired by the philosophical tradition originating with Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, and builds in particular on the formulation of critical thinking by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer with significant subsequent contributions by Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth on the role of communication and recognition for emancipation, cf., Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory*, pp. 47-48. Major proponents of critical theory in IR include Robert Cox and Andrew Linklater, see Robert Cox, “Social Forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory,” *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): pp. 126-155; Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1990). In the context of security studies emancipation addresses “those who are made insecure by the prevailing order”, Jones, *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory*, p. 118.

⁹⁰ In its Frankfurt School inspired strand CSS’s main goal is to “provide deeper understandings of prevailing attitudes and behavior with a view to developing more promising ideas by which to overcome structural and contingent human wrongs.” Ken Booth, “Critical Explorations,” in *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*, ed. Booth, p. 16.

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique,” in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2007), p. 47.

⁹² Jenny Edkins, “Poststructuralism,” in *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Martin Griffiths (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 88.

Post-structuralism therefore examines the discourses that constitute and reproduce the prevailing meaning of such influential concepts as ‘security’ and ‘strategy,’ at given times in society. As Peoples and Vaughan-Williams have commented in their analysis of Foucault:

In a general sense, ‘discourse’ is the context within which regimes of truth come to be. (...) in Foucauldian terms, discourse is understood as series of practices, representations, and interpretations through which different regimes of truth [...] are (re)produced.⁹³

Employing, among others, genealogy and deconstruction as main tools of analysis, a critical discourse perspective investigates how a dominant discourse ‘produces the social reality that it defines.’⁹⁴ Foucault was centrally concerned with ‘the facilitating conditions of possibility for a particular set of power relations.’⁹⁵ For Foucault, discourse is not limited to the textual, or linguistic definition of reality, but includes the practices, norms and rules under which a discursive formation becomes possible and attains regulative status. The formulation of knowledge then is embedded in, and constituted through power. As Foucault has remarked in *Discipline and Punish*:

⁹³ Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, p. 65. See also the treatment of Foucault and his use of discourse in Tony Crowley, *The Politics of Discourse* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

⁹⁴ Milliken, p. 242; see also Can E. Mutlu and Mark B. Salter, “The discursive turn,” in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies*, ed. Mark B. Salter and Can E. Mutlu (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 113. Genealogy refers to an interpretive method inspired by the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and further explored by Foucault, which examines how a particular form of knowledge has come to be understood as lasting and dominant. It investigates how historical narratives for example are established as prevailing continuity, and how they are enforced against other subjugated forms of knowledge that they displace, cf., Milliken, p. 243. In American grand strategy discourse for example, the dominant interpretation of the outcome of the Cold War is that of an American ‘victory’. This historic ‘truth’ emphasizes American leadership and military power, and the continuity of containment. This genealogy displaces other readings that stress the influence of the Helsinki process, civil rights movements in Eastern Europe, or arms control agreements in ending the American-Soviet confrontation. Deconstruction on the other hand is a method of textual analysis, mainly associated with the writings of Derrida, which shows how the reality building function of a discourse mainly relies on binary oppositions that can be reversed and displaced, substituting the ‘orthodoxy’ with an alternative ‘truth,’ cf., *ibid.* Milliken also speaks of the juxtapositional method, which is closely related to the deconstructive method, in that it points out how the ‘truth’ established by an official discourse is also built through the active omission of events and issues, cf., *ibid.* Finally, a focus on subjugated knowledge allows to further explore these alternative accounts of reality that deviate from the dominant discourses, cf., *ibid.* Deconstructing the American grand strategy discourse of hegemony reveals how it exemplary operates on a simple binary coding that juxtaposes American leadership and geopolitical volatility, and excludes alternative realities of international security. Hence, only the United States is able to safeguard the ‘global commons.’

⁹⁵ Mark B. Salter, “Introduction,” in *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies*, p. 5.

(...) power produces [...] reality; it produces domains of objects, and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge gained of him belong to this production.⁹⁶

One of Foucault's most important intellectual endeavors was his concern with this mutual interdependence of knowledge and power in establishing a dominant, legitimized formation of reality through discourse. He would characterize this nexus as power/knowledge, and often apply to the study of how individuals were politically and socially constituted through this process that defined the reality of madness, crime or sexual deviancy.⁹⁷

Drawing from Foucault, the thesis interprets American grand strategy as form of power/knowledge that establishes a dominant geopolitical identity of the United States and connects it to a conforming national security performance through a set of normative and practical factors. Grand strategy as particular geopolitical knowledge thus attains its relevant political, social, and cultural status through its intersection with power networks responsible for the formation of legitimized reality through common sense, formal expertise and political authority. Hollywood, *Foreign Affairs*, the Pentagon, and President Obama are thus all discursive producers centrally involved in the formulation of geopolitical identity, and the definition of national security.

⁹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 194.

⁹⁷ Cf., Salter, p. 6. Foucault has explored these themes on a variety of subjects, most notably through a study of the archaeologies and historical genealogies that gave rise to such concepts as madness, the prison, and sexuality, cf., Michel Foucault *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964); Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge. The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1* (New York: Random House, 1978). *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* are considered to follow Foucault's genealogical conceptualization of discourse, investigating how a given system of thought was historically produced. This method is connected to, but distinctive from Foucault's archeological treatment of the subject of discourse, as applied in *Madness and Civilization*, and laid out in detail in Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972). According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "The premise of the archaeological method is that systems of thought and knowledge (epistemes or discursive formations, in Foucault's terminology) are governed by rules, beyond those of grammar and logic, that operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities that determines the boundaries of thought in a given domain and period. "Michel Foucault," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/#4.3>.

This also means that the thesis is not just concerned with a genealogical and deconstructive reading of representations of identity, but that it considers the practices through which these representations attain political, social and cultural meaning, and thus the material dimension with which they are interceded. Grand strategy is not only writing and speech, but also the process through which writing and speech become accepted as reality. Hence, the thesis interprets Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, integrated into a cross-discursive, intertextual analysis as way to bridge the realms of identity and materiality through discourse.⁹⁸

In its use of discourse the thesis again is inspired by a post-structural understanding of the concept, mainly based on Foucault's writings, such as *The Archeology of Knowledge* and *The Will to Knowledge*, and in particular prominent works in IR that have operationalized it for the study of security, such as Lene Hansen's *Security as Practice*, Kurt Campbell's *Writing Security*, and Stuart Croft's *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*.⁹⁹ Discourse then is the social process of producing reality through the use of language, and the rules under which this process operates.¹⁰⁰ As Croft has defined the concept:

Discourse defines the means by which language conveys meaning through the production, distribution and reception of texts on a conscious and unconscious level.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Cf., Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, p 18. As Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams point out: "Already in *Madness and Civilization* (1964) [...] Foucault examines how the discourse of 'madness' emerges from a complex field of human and nonhuman, linguistic and nonlinguistic elements that consist of social institutions, as well as art and visual representations, scientific statements, and so on. Ibid., p. 17.

⁹⁹ On the critical reconceptualization of the study of International Relations through post-structuralism, discourse and intertextuality, see also James der Derian and Michael Shapiro, eds, *International/Intertextual Relations* (New York: Lexington Books, 1989).

¹⁰⁰ See in this context also the definition of Jennifer Milliken, who describes discourse as: "(...) structures of signification which construct social realities." Milliken, p. 229; see also Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, "Critical discourse analysis: history, agenda, theory, and methodology," in *Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds, Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), pp. 5-6.

¹⁰¹ Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* p. 42.

In terms of security, one of the main features of discourse is to define a common identity of the 'Self,' and to delineate it from the threatening 'Other.'¹⁰² Understood as discourse, American grand strategy then positions the American 'Self' in a world political context, yet the construction of the 'Other' is not limited to the Manichean construct of the enemy, or rival, but it also includes such terms as 'friends,' 'allies,' and 'partners,' which although signifying a similarity to the United States, operate in a geopolitical context of otherness to the singularity of the United States. However, as applied by the thesis, discourse is not just limited to the writing and re-writing of identity, but it links identity and policy, representations and practices. The grand strategy vision of hegemony for example links a dominant identity construct of 'American leadership' to a material reality of military supremacy, the forward basing of U.S. troops in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and the ability for global power projection. As chapter six will demonstrate, superior military power is seen as the foundation of US hegemony, which in turn is the rational for maintaining this superiority. In the words of Lene Hansen: (...) foreign policy discourses articulate and intertwine material factors and ideas to such an extent that the two cannot be separated from one another.¹⁰³

While this mutual interlinking and co-constitution of identity and practice through discourse makes it impossible to determine causality, a critical discourse perspective nonetheless should seek to validate its interpretive findings through a clear, coherent, and comprehensive set of data analysis. In its critical analysis of American grand strategy, the thesis therefore emphasizes the intertextual dimension in the discursive production of reality, and how the interlinking of representations and practices

¹⁰² Campbell, *Writing Security*.

¹⁰³ Hansen, p. 1.

functions across discursive domains, from popular culture to formal research, and political decision-making. As Hansen has pointed out:

The ambition of discourse analysis is not only to understand official discourse, and the texts and representations, which have directly impacted it, but also to analyze how this discourse is present as legitimate in relation to the larger public and how it is reproduced or contested (...).¹⁰⁴

Discourses as ‘structures of signification’ construct social reality through the interconnectedness of signs and signifiers; individual texts acquire their meaning through their reference to other texts.¹⁰⁵ When President Obama refers to America as the ‘indispensable nation’ this construct of geopolitical identity acquires its meaning through its connection to an established foreign policy discourse of American exceptionalism stressing the singularity, superiority and essentiality of the United States in the international system, a series of interconnected texts that can be traced back to at least World War II.¹⁰⁶ The use of the term then not only connects Obama to Secretary of State Madeline Albright and President Bill Clinton, who previously referred to America as the ‘indispensable nation,’ but to an entire genealogy of hegemony that has been dominant in describing America’s role in the world.

However, in its discourse analysis of grand strategy the thesis goes beyond a more limited understanding of intertextuality in two important ways. First, it is not only concerned with tracing textual interconnections within a particular field of discourse, such as political rhetoric, but it is interested in how intertextual links from across discursive sites in establishing political, social and cultural reality. In order to successfully function as articulation of the ‘national interest’ a grand strategy cannot operate as an isolated product of expert knowledge, or political decision-making, but

¹⁰⁴ Hansen, p. 63.

¹⁰⁵ Cf., Mutlu and Salter, p. 114.

¹⁰⁶ Cf., Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” *Life*, February 17, 1941, pp. 61-65.

it must be connected to the larger context of national identity, which it claims to articulate in the context of security and geopolitics. Hence, it is imperative to investigate grand strategy through an intertextual perspective that combines the realms of commonsense knowledge, formal expertise, practical reasoning, and political authority. The thesis thus investigates the intertextuality of discourses within and between popular culture, intellectual expertise, and policymaking in order to determine how the 'big picture' of grand strategy operates as a vision of geopolitical identity and national security, and which geopolitical vision can claim dominant status.

Secondly, the method of intertextuality applied does not only extend to a strictly textual analysis, but also considers the realm of practice, and how geopolitical knowledge is constructed through an intertextual production of discourse. Here, visions of grand strategy are also established through an institutionalized cooperation between the realms of popular entertainment and defense, where the Pentagon is directly involved in the production of American motion pictures. Another example is the infusion of political decision making processes with expert advice and opinion, exhibited in the 'rotating door' that connects think tanks and government offices in Washington DC. As with the incorporation of power/knowledge, and the concern with the production of discourse, this wider understanding of intertextuality again bridges the divide between a primarily representational understanding of discourse that often dominates in the critical literature, and the materialism of positivist approaches.

In the following chapters the thesis will demonstrate that in the context of grand strategy there exist three main geopolitical visions about America's role and position in the world that stand in competition to each other. This constitution and contestation of grand strategy occurs not in isolation, but in the interconnected realms of popular imagination, academic and policy research, and policy making that all form and reformulate American worldviews. These basic discourses can be analytically identified as hegemony, engagement, and restraint; a categorization based on their underlying representations of geopolitical identity and their linkage to different national security policies.¹⁰⁷ It is important to note however that these discourses do not exist in a strict isolated separation from each other, but indeed have multiple intertextual connections between them, constituting various hybrid discourses of hegemonic engagement, or hegemonic restraint respectively. Before the thesis provides a detailed interpretation in the following chapters, these analytical perspectives will be summarized here to provide an initial overview of these interpretive devices.

The first and dominant discourse of American grand strategy is identified as hegemony. This widely shared and entrenched geopolitical vision is anchored in the idea of global leadership of the United States as morally preferable and functionally essential. Frequently, such terms as 'hegemony', 'primacy', 'indispensable nation,' or 'global leadership' are used interchangeably to describe, both the dominant

¹⁰⁷ In the definition of Lene Hansen, 'basic discourses' provide: "(...) an analytical perspective that facilitates a structured analysis of how discourses are formed and engage each other with a foreign policy debate. They identify the main convectors of discussion by asking how competing discourses articulate the relationship between Self and Other;" Hansen, p. 95.

position of the United States in world politics, -politically, militarily, and economically-, and America's special responsibility to continuously maintain a liberal international order that was established 'under U.S. stewardship' after World War 2.¹⁰⁸ A standard trope of this discourse in the context of national security is the necessity of the global military supremacy of the United States to deter potential aggressors, preserve regional stability, and guarantee world peace and access to the 'global commons.'¹⁰⁹ Additionally, it can incorporate the special responsibility of the United States to undertake armed interventions in the face of human rights violations.¹¹⁰ Oftentimes, visions of American 'preponderance' or 'benevolent hegemony' are associated with the ideological influence of neoconservative pundits and scholars such as William Kristol, Robert Kagan, or Charles Krauthammer.¹¹¹ Politically, the neoconservative influence was associated in particular with the George W. Bush administration and the famous 'Bush doctrine' for pre-emptive war, as articulated in the National Security Strategy of 2002.¹¹² However, as the thesis will demonstrate the discourse of hegemony is not restricted to one particular ideology or presidential administration. In fact, the belief in the necessity and indispensability of U.S. power and global leadership unites neoconservatives and

¹⁰⁸ Cf. William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999): pp. 5-41; Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, p. 25-28; Posen, *Restraint*, 24-69; Kagan, *World America Made*; Ian Clark, *Hegemony and International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 23-28. Clark notes how there has been a conflation of the two concepts of hegemony and primacy in IR literature, especially concerning the 'many claims to the hegemonic status of the United States.' Ibid., p. 24. Clark instead differentiates between 'primacy' as rooted in material resources only, and 'hegemony,' which he defines as also grounded in 'legitimacy,' cf., ibid., p. 23. In the context of the thesis, hegemony is analyzed as grand strategy vision of global American leadership, which is both described as liberal and legitimate, and rooted in a superior material power base, centrally involving the capability of the United States for global power projection through its Armed Forces. This also echoes Clark's analysis in that hegemony revolves around the two principal meanings of 'domination' and 'leadership,' cf., ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰⁹ Cf., Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," in *American Defense Policy*, eds. Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta, and Collins G. Shackelford Jr. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 248-268.

¹¹⁰ Cf., Ignatieff, "American Empire."

¹¹¹ Cf., William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (1996): pp. 18-32; Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1990/1991): pp. 23-33.

¹¹² Cf., Charles Krauthammer, "The Bush Doctrine," *Time*, March 05, 2001, p. 42

liberal internationalists, policy makers and IR scholars, bestselling authors and Hollywood filmmakers.

There is a difference however, in the way the hegemony discourse is accentuated politically. Neoconservative proponents of hegemony as primacy emphasize unilateral action, the pre-emptive use of military power against threats to national security, and the unrivalled global military supremacy of the United States.¹¹³ There is a strong identification with the moral superiority of the U.S., and the exceptional values of liberty, freedom and democracy, the country is supposed to represent. Rather than liberal internationalism, American exceptionalism is the foundational element of geopolitical identity.¹¹⁴ This discursive strand the thesis identifies as primacy, or unilateral hegemony. It is the geopolitical vision primarily articulated by neoconservatives and closely associated with the establishment of the Republican Party.

The second significant strand of the hegemony discourse is in turn predominantly associated with the Democratic Party. Here, the emphasis lies on how the global leadership of the United States functions as part of a liberal institutionalist framework, with a preference for multilateral action and international cooperation. It is heavily influenced by liberal theories of International Relations and the Wilsonian tradition in American foreign policy.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, it is assumed that is the United States, who has to lead in these cooperative arrangements, and act unilaterally if

¹¹³ Cf., Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," Statement of Principles," Project for the New American Century, June 3, 1997, accessed January 21, 2014,

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070810113753/www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>; Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004).

¹¹⁴ Cf., Mitt Romney, *No Apology* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2010).

¹¹⁵ Cf., Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It changed the World* (New York, Routledge, 2009), pp. 132-173; Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*.

necessary. A good example for this strand of the hegemony discourse was use of the term 'indispensable nation' in the 1990s by then Secretary of State Madeline Albright and President Bill Clinton to characterize the geopolitical role of the United States in the international system.¹¹⁶ Although often clad in the rhetoric of 'engagement,' this discourse actually represents a form of multilateral hegemony, or hegemonic engagement. Here, the leadership of United States is imagined through a cooperative framework of 'burden-sharing' and 'responsible stakeholders,' but with America firmly at the center of political, economic and military power.¹¹⁷

Engagement is identified as the second basic grand strategy discourse. It is based on the idea that the United States should seek international cooperation with partners, allies and even potential rivals in order to successfully manage international affairs. Rather than the use of military power this discourse emphasizes, diplomatic solutions, economic interdependence, 'soft power' and the importance of international organizations and multilateral institutions.¹¹⁸ Closely connected with the engagement discourse under the Obama administration is the idea of relative American decline and the end of U.S. dominance in a 'post-American world'.¹¹⁹

While the United States is expected to remain the most powerful actor in the international system for the foreseeable future, it is represented as a 'primus inter

¹¹⁶ 'Transcript: Albright Interview on NBC-TV', February 19, 1998, accessed April 28, 2014, http://www.fas.org/news/iraq/1998/02/19/98021907_tpo.html; William J. Clinton, "Second Inaugural Address, January 20, 1997, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54183>.

¹¹⁷ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth. "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment." *International Security* 37, no. 3 (2012), pp. 7-51. Brooks, Wohlforth and Ikenberry refer to this grand strategy of liberal hegemony as 'deep engagement'; *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ Cf., Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*; Kupchan, *No One's World*.

¹¹⁹ Cf., Zakaria, *The Post-American World*.

pares’ rather than an unchecked global superpower.¹²⁰ Subsequently, it becomes a necessity for the United States to engage with rising powers to maintain a liberal order that can no longer rely on the sole leadership of just one dominant actor. One prominent example for the engagement discourse was the G-2 scenario, envisioned by former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. Here, a duopoly of the United States and China at the center of world politics would have jointly managed global economic and security matters.¹²¹ Instead of the singularity of American power and the ‘unipolar moment,’ global multipolarity and a globalized network of interconnected hubs dominate the geopolitical imagination in this discourse.

Finally, the third basic discourse of grand strategy can be identified as the discourse of restraint. This geopolitical vision stands diametrically opposed to grand strategies of neoconservative primacy, global leadership and liberal interventionism. Instead of acting as the ‘policeman of the world,’ the United States is supposed to emphasize a domestic focus of ‘nation building at home.’¹²² The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are characterized as waste of financial and military resources and dangerous folly, fuelled by geopolitical visions of American omnipotence and unmatched military supremacy.¹²³ In this view, the overextension of American resources contributed to the fiscal instability of the United States and hastened American decline. Instead, the United States is supposed to decrease its global footprint, most importantly its global network of military bases and forwardly deployed American troops. The restraint

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Cf., Richard C. Bush III, “The United States and China: A G-2 in the Making?,” Brookings, October 11, 2011, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2011/10/11-china-us-g2-bush>.

¹²² Cf., Preble, *The Power Problem*.

¹²³ Cf., Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

discourse calls for Americans to finally ‘come home’ from the Middle East, East Asia and Europe.¹²⁴

Closely associated with the realist school of IR, and such prominent scholars as John Mearsheimer or Stephen Walt, part of the restraint discourse is articulated as grand strategy of ‘offshore balancing.’¹²⁵ While remaining a regional hegemon in North America, the United States is supposed to only use its military power when its vital security interests are concerned. Thus, the U.S. should only act if an actor threatens to likewise establish a regional hegemony as for example attempted by Nazi Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia in World War 2. Humanitarian intervention, or the individual defense of South Korea or Taiwan on the other hand should not be part of the national security design of the U.S. To its critics, restraint and offshore balancing represent a dangerous new form of ‘isolationism,’ a potentially catastrophic disengagement of the United States from the world.¹²⁶

From a critical perspective, offshore balancing actually represents another form of discursive intertextuality of geopolitical imagination, between regional hegemony and global retrenchment, identified in the thesis as hegemonic restraint. A more fully articulated discourse of restraint, as proposed for example by progressive think tanks, or critics on the Left of the political spectrum calls for the United States to concentrate exclusively on territorial self-defense, to reduce the political clout of the military-industrial complex, and to further prioritize domestic issues such as

¹²⁴ Cf., Bacevich, *Washington Rules*; Preble, *The Power Problem*.

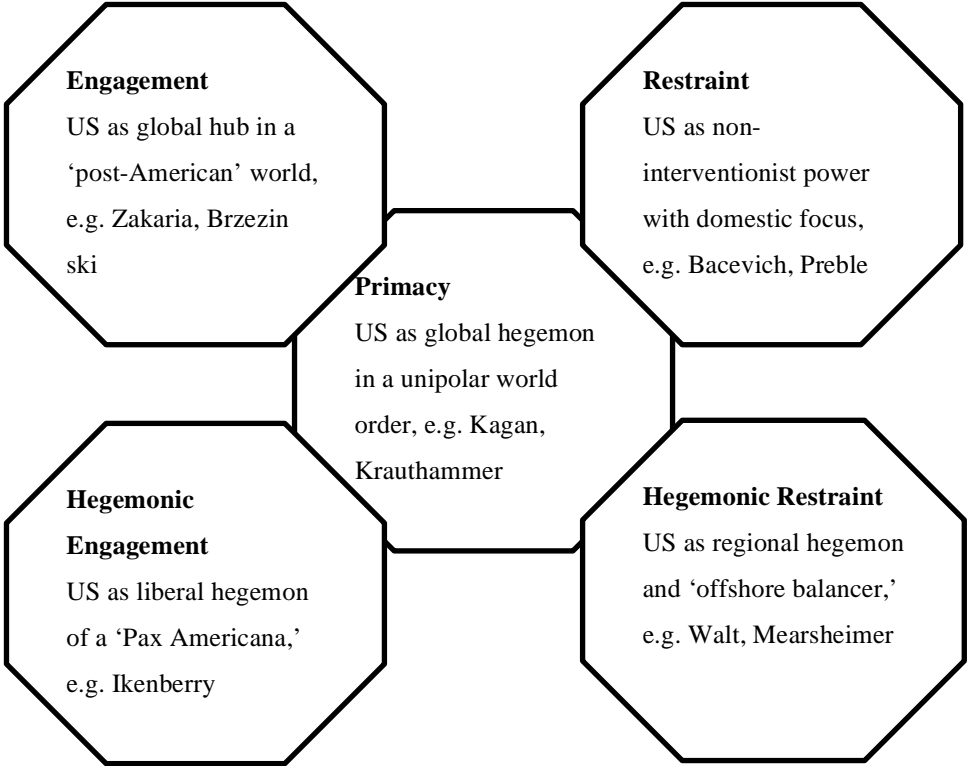
¹²⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, “Why John J. Mearsheimer Is Right (About Some Things),” *The Atlantic*, January/February 2012, accessed October 24, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/01/why-john-j-mearsheimer-is-right-about-some-things/308839>; Walt, “Offshore balancing: An idea whose time has come.”

¹²⁶ Cf., Andrew Bacevich, “70 Years of “New Isolationism”,” *The American Conservative*, October 24, 2013, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/70-years-of-new-isolationism/>.

healthcare, education and public infrastructure over an expansive foreign policy.¹²⁷ Politically, the restraint discourse finds support both among libertarians such as the conservative Tea party movement, and liberal critics of American imperialism and militarism.¹²⁸

Fig. 2 Discourses of American grand strategy

Basic Discourses



Hybrid Discourses

Before the thesis further investigates the political significance of the competing geopolitical visions in American grand strategy discourses, it will now first provide an overview over the intellectual history and legacy of geopolitics, in order to

¹²⁷ See in this context, Chalmers Johnson, *Dismantling The Empire* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), and the publications in the 'American Empire Project' series; see also Carl Conetta, *Reasonable Defense: A Sustainable Approach to Securing the Nation* (Washington DC: Project on Defense Alternatives, 2012); Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick, *The Untold History of America* (London: Ebury Press, 2012), pp. 549-615.

¹²⁸ Cf., Blake, "The Republican Party likes Rand Paul's foreign policy — at least for now."

demonstrate how the spatialization of global order and national power has been conceptualized in the past, and how a critical reading of this theme can be a useful analytical tool for the understanding of grand strategy discourses. In order to better appreciate the political impact and intellectual depth of American grand strategy, we should include the perspective of geopolitics in our critical analysis. Geopolitics, positioned at the junction between geography and International Relations is the visualization of grand strategy on a world map of power and order.

Part II Geopolitics

Geopolitics - Past and Present

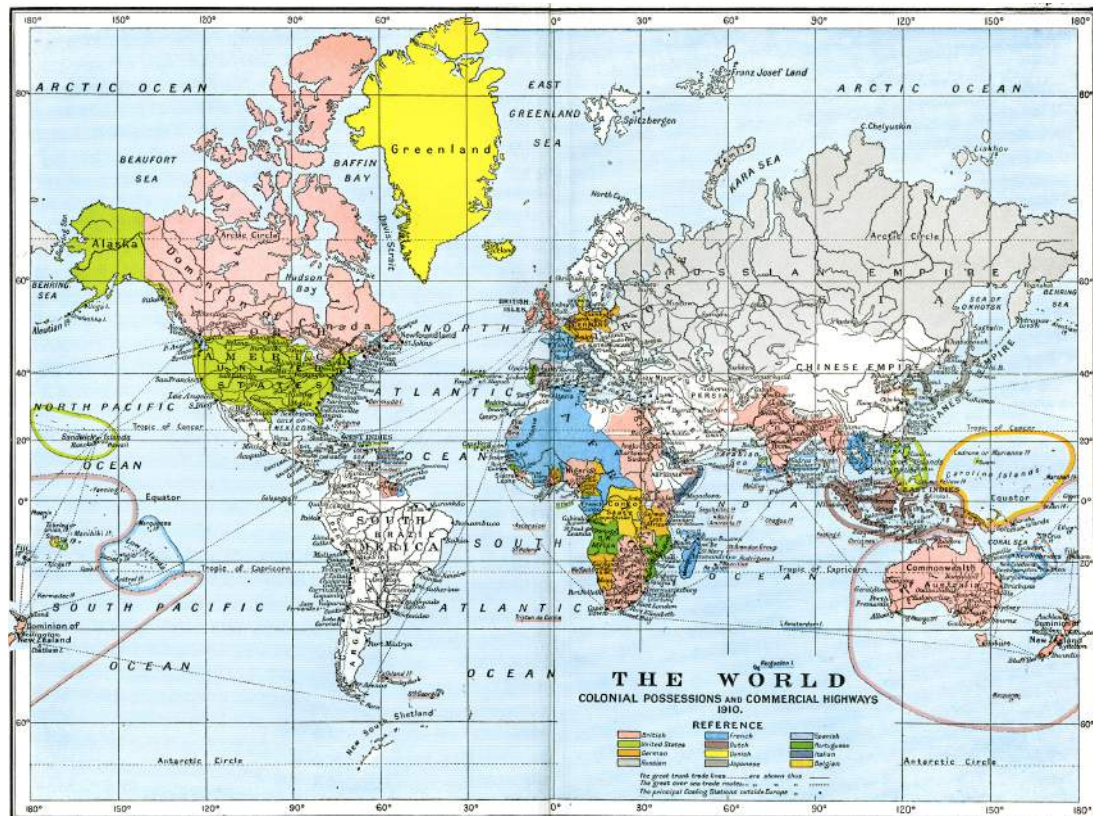
The story of geopolitics could begin with a world map from 1910.¹²⁹ The world the Cambridge modern history atlas depicts on this map is quite colorful. The empires of Europe, Imperial Japan and the United States of America have painted the globe, from the Red in the British Dominion of Canada to the Orange of German Cameroon, a Japanese Grey in Korea and the bright Green of the American Philippines. There are only a few white spots the imperial paintbrush has missed. At the same time, this world of far flung empires is connected by a spider web of black lines crisscrossing the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, indicating the main routes of trans-continental traffic, commerce and communication. Economic exchange, technological innovation and scientific advancement have reached an unprecedented height, connecting the world as never before.¹³⁰ It was in this world of established

¹²⁹ "The World - Colonial Possessions and Commercial Highways 1910," in *The Cambridge Modern History Atlas* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912).

¹³⁰ Cf. Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 40-41. David Stevenson, *1914-1918 The History of the First World War* (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 5-8.

imperial rule and seemingly unbound progress that geopolitics emerged on the scene at the turn of the last century.

Fig. 3 The World - Colonial Possessions and Commercial Highways 1910¹³¹



The unknown direction this first globalization was headed in propelled scholars in Europe and the United States to rethink the relationship of space and power in world politics, looking for a grand strategy to guide their nations through what they believed was a perilous future ahead. Men like Halford Mackinder, Alfred Mahan or Karl Haushofer shared the belief that natural causes and material conditions, - geographical location, size of population, or the possession of natural resources-, were paramount in determining a state's development and its position in the world.

Rooted in the philosophy of Descartes these intellectuals firmly believed in a

¹³¹ "Colonial Possessions and Commercial Highways of the World, 1910," Maps ETC, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/7600/7661/7661.htm>. License: Educational Use. A maximum of twenty-five (25) maps may be used in any non-commercial, educational project (report, presentation, display, website, etc.) without special permission from the Florida Center for Instructional Technology (FCIT) at the University of South Florida.

scientific rationalism that allowed them to analyze the external reality of the world and arrive at lasting and correct conclusions about the inner truth of nature. ‘Cartesian perspectivalism’, ‘Imperialism’ and ‘Social Darwinism’ were the lenses through which their geopolitical gaze fell onto the world.¹³² This intellectual origin would define classical geopolitics and mark its ongoing attempt to establish a vision of the world through a particular representation of its spatial features, and to formulate a world order based on power and the control of space.

Classical geopolitics from Mackinder to Haushofer: Heartland, sea power and Lebensraum

On the evening of the 21st of January 1904, the British geographer Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) presented one of the most influential and enduring geopolitical concepts of all time. On this occasion, speaking before a rather modest audience, Mackinder presented to the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) a paper titled “The Geographical Pivot of History.”¹³³ Mackinder explained that in the 20th century geography had to be concerned with the physical control of space and its meaning in history.¹³⁴ From this outset Mackinder postulated his main argument: The steppe region of northern and central Eurasia was the ‘Heartland,’ the ‘pivot of history.’ Who controlled the Heartland, would be able to rule the world.¹³⁵

¹³² Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 22.

¹³³ Mackinder stated that the age of Western discovery and exploration, the ‘Colombian’ age that had seen the expansion of Europe virtually unrestricted had come to an end. It had taken with it the meaning of geography as tool for mapping unknown lands in faraway places. The ‘post-Colombian age’ would occur in a closed world system. The result of this would be that “(...) every explosion of social forces, instead of being dissipated in a surrounding circuit of unknown space [...] will be sharply re-echoed from the far side of the globe.” Halford Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History”, *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): p. 422.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ In Mackinder’s view, more than anything else it had been resistance against repeated invasion emerging from this area, from Attila the Hun to Genghis Khan that had defined European civilization. A future global conflict would thus be fought between the sea powers of the West and the land powers of the East, deciding the fate of the

Mackinder's Heartland theory modified in 1919 and again in 1943, would influence geopolitical thinkers, strategists, academics and politicians for generations to come.¹³⁶ It still enjoys wide respect and appreciation today, notably in realist circles, where Mackinder is credited, among other things, with correctly predicting the geopolitical antagonism of the Cold War.¹³⁷ Gerry Kearns on the other hand recently offered a critical reading of Mackinder and the geopolitics of imperialism that he advocated, and the strong parallels to contemporary imperial and geopolitical thought.¹³⁸

Mackinder's geostrategic focus, a central dichotomy of sea and land power, was echoed by the American Rear Admiral, lecturer and author Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914).¹³⁹ His most prominent work, the seminal four volume *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, published between 1890 and 1905 dealt with the role of natural and political conditions for the development of sea power, and described the rise of British naval supremacy and subsequent economic and political pre-eminence

world. The mobility of forces from the heartland that in the past had relied on horses, and that in the meantime had been surpassed by the commercial and military navies of the maritime powers of the West would transform through the advent of the transcontinental railway in Russia. This development would inevitably challenge the position of the sea faring powers, Great Britain first among them, which occupied the inner and outer marginal crescent around the pivot area, and could lead to the consolidation a world empire, *ibid.* pp. 423-432. This would be the likely outcome if Russia would form an alliance with Germany, and these continental powers were to devote their resources to fleet building, *ibid.* p. 436.

¹³⁶ Halford Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals & Reality* (London: Constable & Company, 1917), and "The round world and the winning of the peace," *Foreign Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1943): pp. 595-605. *Democratic Ideals & Reality* contained Mackinder's most famous quote: "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World." See also Geoffrey Sloan, "Sir Halford J. Mackinder: The Heartland theory then and now", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (1999): pp. 15-38. It is important to note that Mackinder did not advocate a simplistic geographical determinism, but argued for acknowledging the profound impact of physical conditions on the strategic position of a state, its social development and its economic, political and military power. The role of geography he saw so evidently played out in history. Politically, he argued for a strengthening and consolidation of the British Empire in order to counteract the danger he predicted to emerge from the continent, cf. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals & Reality*; Mackinder, *Geography as an Aid to Statecraft* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982).

¹³⁷ For example Colin Gray, "In Defence of the Heartland: Sir Halford Mackinder and His Critics a Hundred Years On", *Comparative Strategy* 23, no. 1 (2004): pp. 9-25, Brigadier Robert Fry, "End of the continental century" *The RUSI Journal* 143, no. 3 (1998): pp. 15-18.

¹³⁸ Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire – The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³⁹ In contrast to Mackinder, Mahan saw sea power not land power as the superior force and rather than the result of economic development it was its very foundation, see Paul Kennedy: "Mahan vs. Mackinder: Two Interpretations of Sea Power," in *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945* (London: Allen & Unwin)

in the world.¹⁴⁰ While Anglo-American geopolitics was largely preoccupied with the meaning of maritime vs. continental space for influencing a nation's power position, *Geopolitik* on the European continent would take on a different view, treating geography as physical determinant for the state's very existence.¹⁴¹ *Geopolitik*, as biologization of political power and geographical space would reach its apex and greatest infamy under Professor Karl Haushofer (1869-1946), who sought to deliver a scientific foundation for German imperial expansionism.¹⁴² Central to Haushofer's

¹⁴⁰ Jon Sumida, "Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician", *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22 (1999): p. 43. Mahan lists six 'principal conditions' for the development of sea power: "I. Geographical Position. II. Physical Conformation (...). III. Extent of Territory. IV. Number of People. V. Character of the People. VI. Character of the Government, (...)". Alfred Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660-1783* (London: Samson, 1890), pp. 28-29. Mahan argued that development of commercial and military naval assets was the defining strategic tool that determined the fate of a great power. Mahan was widely read, not least in the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II., where an ambitious naval armament program was to guarantee a 'place in the sun' for Europe's imperial latecomer, cf., Paul Kennedy, "The Influence and Limitations of Sea Power", *The International History Review* 10, no. 1 (1988): pp. 2-17.

¹⁴¹ The first use of the term *Geopolitik* is attributed to the conservative Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellén (1864-1922), see Bertil Haggman, "Rudolf Kjellén and modern Swedish geopolitics," *Geopolitics* 3, no. 2 (1998): pp. 99-112. In Kjellén's understanding, geopolitics was a method of analysis concerned with a nation's natural borders and territory and the extension of space under its control, *ibid.*, pp. 105-106. Kjellén's definition of the state as an organism was directly based on the writings of the German geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), who had created the concept of living space, (*Lebensraum*). For Ratzel, national territory served as the organic foundation for a population's growth and the development of the state. If a population reached a certain size, its living space had to expand in order to sustain continued growth, or else the population was doomed to decline and ultimately vanish, having failed in the survival of the fittest that determined the evolution of species just as it commanded the rise and fall of nations. For a detailed analysis of the concept of living space, see Woodruff D. Smith, "Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum", *German Studies Review* 3 (1980): pp. 51-68.

¹⁴² Haushofer served as Professor for Geography at the University of Munich (1921-1939) and was one of the editors for the *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* (1924-1944). The organic unity of land and people that *Geopolitik* postulated, lay also at the heart of the Nazi ideology of 'blood and soil' (*Blut und Boden*), which Haushofer actively supported through his writings. It is not clear if Adolf Hitler ever directly read any of the writings of Karl Haushofer, it is more likely that Hitler was familiar with the general concepts of *Geopolitik*, when he wrote down his own geopolitical and ideological vision for Germany, his *Weltanschauung* in *Mein Kampf*, cf., Ian Kershaw, *Hitler 1889-1945*, (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 174. After Hess undertook his mysterious flight to England in 1941, Haushofer was certainly no longer a person to wield any political influence, if he ever had enjoyed any to begin with; see in this context also Günter Wolkersdorfer, "Karl Haushofer and geopolitics - the history of a German mythos", *Geopolitics* 4, no. 3 (1999): pp. 145-160. The second outstanding figure associated with German *Geopolitik* was Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), unlike Haushofer an official member of the NSDAP, and one of the Third Reich's top jurists, who had been a leading proponent of the concept of *Großraum* as political and legal ordering principle and counter model to the universalism of Western liberalism and Russian Communism. See Günter Maschke, ed, *Carl Schmitt - Staat, Großraum, Nomos* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), pp. xx-xxvii. William Hooker, *Carl Schmitt's International Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2009), pp. 126-155. Haushofer echoed Schmitt's outlook as he styled his geopolitics as a distinctive German response to what he perceived as decadent, plutocratic, Western and 'Jewish' phenomena such as urbanization, industrialization, materialism and universal and formalistic legalism, in contrast idealizing an agrarian, autarkic and traditional Germany which should enforce its natural right to expand and rule, cf., Dan Diner, "Knowledge of expansion on the geopolitics of Karl Haushofer," *Geopolitics* 4, no. 3 (1999): pp. 161-188. In his major geopolitical work, the *Nomos of the Earth*, published in 1950, Schmitt widened the scope of his argumentation beyond Germany and described the development of world order by Europe's geopolitical expansionism and legal institutionalism and its subsequent replacement as ordering power by the United States. Cf., Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1950). Schmitt was an outspoken critic of this universalism, which he saw as a dangerous nihilism negating the individuality of states and allowing for constant interventionism on the basis of enforcing universal values. Lately there has been a renewed interest in Schmitt's geopolitical

thinking was a biological determinism that centered on the organic needs and living conditions of the German people, which he postulated was demanding the expansion of German living space.¹⁴³ While Haushofer's influence on the expansionist and racist foreign policy of Nazi-Germany was probably more abstract-theoretical than practical, he was credited in the United States with being the actual 'brain' behind Hitler.¹⁴⁴ Haushofer's intellectual legacy was a lasting association of geopolitics/*Geopolitik* with imperialism, militarism, genocide and expansionism; at the same time it was his reflection in the United States that firmly established the term geopolitics in American discourse.¹⁴⁵ As Adolf Stone, a former student of Haushofer wrote in the *Journal of Geography* in 1953: "(...) can we in the United States with our tremendous world responsibilities afford to disregard this 'science of space' of the man from Munich?"¹⁴⁶

Geopolitics makes a comeback

Following World War II geopolitics, stigmatized through its association with Nazi-Germany, was largely ignored in the United States. Nicholas J. Spykman (1893-

analysis, in particular his assessment of American power as foundation for a Western, liberal world order, and his argument for a multipolar system, cf., Hooker.

¹⁴³ Haushofer's writings teem with biological vocabulary, speaking of 'border circulation' (*Grenzdurchblutung*) and 'national soil' (*Volksboden*), documenting the close connection to Ratzel's biological-geographical determinism, see also Diner, p. 164. According to Hitler and Haushofer, the Germans were a 'people without space', a *Volk ohne Raum*, and the size of their population and relatively small territory inhabited by Germany, necessitated it to acquire more space to cultivate agriculturally. The 'natural' area for this was seen in Central Europe, or *Mitteleuropa*. Here, Germany was to establish its political and economic hegemony, and replace the artificial system the Versailles treaty had put in place with its own spatial reordering, its *Großraumordnung*. Haushofer developed these themes in numerous publications, an exemplary articulation of his argument can be found in Karl Haushofer, *Weltpolitik von Heute* (Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1934), notably pp. 11-17.

¹⁴⁴ Haushofer was presented as the leader of an infamous *Institut für Geopolitik*, which was supposed to employ at least 1.000 scientists and spies around the world to map out the blueprint for German world conquest. Although a complete fiction, Hollywood featured both Haushofer and his 'institute' in the 1943 propaganda film "Plan for Destruction" by Edward Cahn, cf., Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, pp. 120-121. See also Mark Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization* (New York, London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 19-23.

¹⁴⁵ See for example Robert Strausz-Hupé, *Geopolitics - The Struggle for Space and Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942).

¹⁴⁶ Adolf Stone, "Geopolitics as Haushofer thought it", *Journal of Geography* 52 (1953): p. 171.

1943) had his last book *The Geography of the Peace* published posthumously in 1943. In it he modified Mackinder's Heartland theory into his own 'Rimland' theory, which required the United States to provide global stability by securing the Eurasian rimland regions through collaboration with Great Britain and the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁷ Robert Strausz-Hupé (1903-2002), like Spykman a geopolitical thinker and immigrant from Europe argued for the necessity of a firm U.S. commitment against the Soviet Union, actively supporting a grand strategy of containment.¹⁴⁸ The fear of territorial domination of Western Europe and East Asia by the Soviet Union would provide a key argument for the military presence, long-term commitment and political alliances of America on both continents during the Cold War.¹⁴⁹

From the 1970s onwards, geopolitics in the U.S. would no longer be associated with biological determinism and 'social Darwinism' à la Haushofer and Ratzel, but rather understood along neorealist assumptions about systemic anarchy in the international system and the spatial dimension of the super power confrontation of the Cold War.¹⁵⁰ Geopolitics was revived in particular due to the use of the term by Henry Kissinger as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. Kissinger's geopolitical vision consisted of an equilibrium between the United States, China and

¹⁴⁷ The 'rimland' was defined as coastal Europe, the Persian Gulf region and the 'Asiatic monsoon lands'. Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943), Robert Strausz-Hupe, review of *The Geography of the Peace*, by Nicholas J. Spykman, *Military Affairs* 8 (1944): pp. 144-145.

¹⁴⁸ Harvey Sicherman, "Robert Strausz-Hupé: His Life and Times", *Orbis* 55, no. 3 (Spring 2003): pp. 205-207.

¹⁴⁹ George F. Kennan, the 'father' of containment has explained that he envisioned this strategy originally as an answer to the political-ideological threat of the Soviet Union to Western Europe and Japan in the late 1940s, while the military dimension would come to dominate the perception of the Soviet threat by the 1980s; a military threat Kennan himself claims, he never saw as very credible, cf., George F. Kennan, "Containment Then and Now," *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 4 (Spring, 1987): pp. 885-890.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography. Second Edition* (Essex: Longman, 1989): pp. 51-54; G. Dijkink & V. Mamadouh, "Geopolitics, International Relations and Political Geography: The Politics of Geopolitical Discourse," *Geopolitics* 11, no. 3 (2006): p. 350.

the Soviet Union, similar to the European ‘concert of powers’ following the Congress of Vienna.¹⁵¹

In the United States today, classical geopolitics continues to be in use as an analytical tool to visualize world maps of conflict, localizing spheres of influence, and marking danger zones in the international system.¹⁵² The existence of spaces of volatility, occupied by failed states and rouge regimes, terrorist camps and drug cartels or even online by cyber criminals is represented as serious threat to national security and international order that can require the United States to act, if necessary by force.¹⁵³

One prominent example for this argumentation can be found in the map Thomas P. M. Barnett drew for the U.S. Department of Defense in 2004, presenting a zone of stability, a ‘working core’ that encompassed North America, Europe and Japan and an ‘arch of instability’, a crescent of geopolitical volatility that stretched from Morocco to Indonesia.¹⁵⁴ The Heartland had become the ‘Axis of Evil.’ Under President George W. Bush America’s geopolitical vision of liberal empire and global military supremacy, pre-emptively engaging ‘rouge states’ and transforming the political and social fabric of entire nations through ‘regime change’, would culminate in the Iraq War.¹⁵⁵ The Iraq invasion and its aftermath demonstrated the inherent

¹⁵¹ Kissinger elaborates on this view in Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), pp. 703-733.

¹⁵² Cf. Simon Dalby, “Calling 911: geopolitics, security and America’s new war,” *Geopolitics* 8, no. 3 (2003): pp. 61-86; John Morrissey, “Architects of Empire: The Military–Strategic Studies Complex and the Scripting of U.S. National Security,” *Antipode* 43, no. 2 (2011): pp. 435-470.

¹⁵³ Cf., Sam C. Sarkesian, et al. *U.S. National Security: Policymakers, Processes & Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008), p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map* (New York: Berkely Books, 2004).

¹⁵⁵ John Agnew, “American hegemony into American empire? Lessons from the Invasion of Iraq,” *Antipode* 35, no. 5 (2003): pp. 871-885; Darel Paul criticizes the use of a traditional geopolitics for explaining the motive behind the Iraq War by critical academics as misleading and instead argues for a Gramscian ‘autonomous state’

danger in subjecting the entire world to one particular geopolitical vision of space and order. In Afghanistan and Iraq violently enforcing a simplistic Manichean worldview on a complex reality that did not conform to the categorization of classical geopolitics led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives; it produced an economic cost of \$1.7 trillion that put an immense strain on the finances of the U.S. government; and it seriously undermined the legitimacy and effectiveness of America's global leadership role.¹⁵⁶

Fig. 4 'The Pentagon's new map'¹⁵⁷



theory, Darel E. Paul, "The Siren Song of Geopolitics: Towards a Gramscian Account of the Iraq War," *Millennium* 36, no. 1 (2007): pp. 51-76. In the words of Edward Said:

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Trotta, "Iraq war costs U.S. more than \$2 trillion: study," *Reuters*, March 14, 2013, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/14/us-iraq-war-anniversary-idU.S.BRE92D0PG20130314>. According to *Reuters*: "The U.S. war in Iraq has cost \$1.7 trillion with an additional \$490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than \$6 trillion over the next four decades counting interest, a study released on Thursday said. The war has killed at least 134,000 Iraqi civilians and may have contributed to the deaths of as many as four times that number, according to the Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. When security forces, insurgents, journalists and humanitarian workers were included, the war's death toll rose to an estimated figure of 176,000 to 189,000, the study said;" *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Mapping America's War on Terrorism: an aggressive new strategy* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010), accessed September 17, 2014, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Pentagon's_War_on_Terrorism_strategy_2010.jpg.

The critical turn

Against the Machiavellian perspective of classical geopolitics, its self-proclaimed scientific rationalism, the dichotic categorization of the world into spheres of order and zones of threat, and the justification of imperialist and militarist policies, critical geopolitics emerged to provide an alternative outlook on the relationship between geography and world politics. Geopolitics would no longer be seen as scientific method based on the analysis of materiel conditions of physical reality, but understood as social construct of knowledge, critically examined for the origin, direction and effect of its discourses. One of the first to rethink the meaning of geopolitics and the relationship of geography and statehood was the French geographer Yves Lacoste, who published his *La géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (Geography is first and foremost about making war) in 1976.¹⁵⁸ Published only two years later Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) went to demonstrate how the Middle East existed as geographical entity only in its relation to the imperial powers of Europe and how the 'Orient' had been actively constructed in European thought and action for centuries.¹⁵⁹

This began a shift in the academic evaluation of geopolitics in political geography and International Relations that would be labeled 'critical geopolitics'. Inspired by authors like Lacoste and Said, and in particular from ideas of post-structuralism associated with the works of Derrida and Foucault, academics like John Agnew,

¹⁵⁸ Yves Lacoste, *La Géographie ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre* (Paris: Maspéro, 1976). Motivated by the violent struggle for independence in the French colonies of Indochina and Algeria, Lacoste wanted to examine how geography was used as justification for imperialism and colonialism and instrumentalized in the bloody conflicts over territory and political control witnessed in the 20th century.

¹⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).

Simon Dalby, Klaus Dodds and Gearóid Ó Tuathail established a new way of thinking about the meaning of geography in world politics, emphasizing the historical and spatial contextuality and discursive practices of geopolitics.¹⁶⁰ Space was not a material factor determining national power, but a subject of constant social interpretation, dependent on cultural factors. In following, this segment will concentrate on the outline of critical geopolitics provided by Ó Tuathail, as it presents the most comprehensive account of the field's basic theoretical and methodological features.

In line with critical security studies, critical geopolitics rejects the determinism and materialism of neorealism and structuralism and operates within a post-positivist ontological and epistemological framework, which also sets it apart from mainstream constructivism.¹⁶¹ Critical geopolitics is a fundamentally subjective perspective in the sense that it “recognizes that how people know, categorize and make sense of world politics is an interpretative cultural practice.”¹⁶² In critical geopolitics the geographic location of a state does not naturally result in a predisposition towards a particular course of action, as classical geopolitics would suggest, rather it influences the way people think about their state and the world around it.¹⁶³ Critical geopolitics does not ignore the significance of material factors like geographic position, or even

¹⁶⁰ See for example Simon Dalby, “American security discourse: the persistence of geopolitics,” *Political Geography Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1990): pp. 171-188; Simon Dalby, “Critical geopolitics: discourse, difference, and dissent,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 3 (1991): pp. 261-283; John Agnew, *Geopolitics re-visioning world politics* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998); Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*; Klaus Dodds, “The 1982 Falklands War and a Critical Geopolitical Eye: Steve Bell and the If... Cartoons,” *Political Geography* 15, no. 6 (1996): pp. 571-592.

¹⁶¹ Phil Kelly “A Critique of Critical Geopolitics,” *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): p. 28.

¹⁶² Gearóid Ó Tuathail, *The Geopolitics Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 7.

¹⁶³ It does “(...) influence the rules and conventions by which political behavior is structured, regulated and judged.” Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics in a changing world* (Essex: Prentice Hall, 2000), p. 35. For example, stressing the insular nature of Great Britain helped to advocate a vision of ‘splendid isolation’ for British grand strategy, yet it was not written into the nation’s geographic DNA. German geopolitical thinking in contrast was preoccupied with the country’s central location, its *Mittellage* since 1871. And yet from the same set of geographic parameters two diametrically opposed visions of a ‘German Europe’ and a ‘European Germany’ could emerge in the first and second half of the 20th century respectively.

deny their existence, but it examines the way these factors influence our thinking, how we perceive and interpret them and how we construct them in our view of the world. The material world in short does not exist independent from social construction. Central to the understanding of critical geopolitics as formulated by Ó Tuathail and others is again the notion of discourse and the understanding of power as power/knowledge following Foucault.¹⁶⁴ For Foucault:

(...) knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations.¹⁶⁵

Rather than defining power as the ability to make someone do something, power is the ability to define meaning and create knowledge through discourse.¹⁶⁶ In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault defines discourse as a group of acts of formulation (sentences or propositions) constituted by a group of statements (the function that gives a group of sequences of signs an existence).¹⁶⁷ As used by Foucault:

(...) the term discourse can be defined as the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus I shall be able to speak of clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse.¹⁶⁸

In the words of Ó Tuathail and Agnew:

Discourses are best conceptualized as sets of capabilities people have, as sets of socio-cultural resources used by people in the construction of meaning about their world and their activities. It is NOT simply speech or written statements but the rules by which verbal speech and written statements are made meaningful.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.

¹⁶⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁶ Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁶⁷ Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, pp. 97-98; pp. 120-127.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁶⁹ Ó Tuathail and Agnew, "Geopolitics and discourse," pp. 192-193; see also the definition of discourse in Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Theorizing practical geopolitical reasoning: the case of the United States' response to the war in Bosnia," *Political Geography* 21 (2002): p. 605.

To analyze geopolitics is to analyze geopolitical discourses, the use of texts and contexts that construct 'world politics'.¹⁷⁰ Geopolitics then can be studied through the labels of global space and maps of conflict, produced and re-produced to be accepted as dominant knowledge. This also opens and widens the understanding of geopolitics beyond state-centrism and the elite level of political decision-making.¹⁷¹ Critical geopolitics does not deny the importance of political elites in world politics but stresses how these elites are embedded in a nation's framework of reference, and how from this pool of common identity and shared experiences, geopolitical discourses are contextualized.

In critically investigating the textuality of geopolitics, we are engaging not only geopolitical texts but also the historical, geographical, technological, and sociological contexts within which these texts arise and gain social meaning and persuasive force.¹⁷²

Ó Tuathail refers to this context as geopolitical culture, a culture of how a state conceptualizes its unique identity, role and position in the world.¹⁷³ The place where the identities, visions and imaginations of geopolitics find expression is in discourse and as a state can have more than one geopolitical vision for itself, there are also a variety of geopolitical discourses that exist in society, including as resistance to

¹⁷⁰ Martin Müller, "Doing discourse analysis in Critical Geopolitics," *L'Espace Politique* 12, no. 3 (2010).

¹⁷¹ As such critical geopolitics also stands as an alternative to 'great man' theories and teleological narratives of world history, as represented by historians and philosophers like Friedrich Hegel, Heinrich von Treitschke, or Leopold von Ranke, and which have been emulated by neoconservative scholars, such as Francis Fukuyama, or Robert Kagan cf., Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The free Press, 1992); Kagan, *The World America Made*.

¹⁷² Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 73.

¹⁷³ We can relate geopolitical culture to the concept of a broader political culture of a society which has been defined by Sidney Verba as 'the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place', quoted in Carlo J. Bonura Jr. "The occulted Geopolitics of Nation and Culture," in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, p. 90. According to Ó Tuathail a geopolitical culture emerges in every state as it encounters the world and is conditioned by its geographical situation, historical formation and bureaucratic organization, as well as by the power networks operating within the state, its national identity discourses and geopolitical traditions of foreign policy thinking (i.e. realism, liberalism, etc.). Within a geopolitical culture then perceptions and interpretations of world politics, or 'geopolitical imaginations', can exist that are oftentimes not unitarily shared, but vary among different groups in society and competing geopolitical visions for a state's role and position in the world can compete with each other, as for example between a 'Western' or 'Asiatic' orientation for Russia or an isolationist or interventionist America. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "Geopolitical Structures and Cultures: Towards Conceptual Clarity in the Critical Study of Geopolitics," in *Geopolitics, Global Problems and Regional Concerns*, ed, Lasha Tchantouridze (Winnipeg: Centre for Defence and Security Studies, 2004): pp. 75-102. Ó Tuathail, *Geopolitics Reader*, pp. 7-9.

dominant narratives of world politics. Ó Tuathail distinguishes three different types of discourse in geopolitics:¹⁷⁴ Formal geopolitics is expressed in geopolitical theories and visions produced by ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ in think tanks, universities, war colleges, the form most closely associated with traditional geopolitics.¹⁷⁵ Practical geopolitics consists of narratives used by politicians and policy makers to conduct foreign and security policy, from declarations of war to diplomatic communiqués and public speeches.¹⁷⁶ Popular geopolitics is the representation of world politics in popular culture, found in movies, magazines, books and other creative mediums.¹⁷⁷

The geopolitical discourse among academics, pundits, journalists, politicians, foreign policy advisors and the general public in its formal, practical and popular form serves to make sense of world politics and promises strategic insight into coming developments in international affairs. The ‘authorship’ of geopolitical discourse is essential; the way geopolitics is presented will depend heavily on who is telling the story. To quote Leslie Hepple, geopolitical texts are “(...) serving the interests of particular groups in society and helping to sustain and legitimate certain perspectives and interpretations.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, p. 5; Ó Tuathail, “Understanding Critical Geopolitics: Geopolitics and Risk Society,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2/3 (1999): pp.107-124; here Ó Tuathail also mentions structural geopolitics, as the processes and tendencies such as globalization, information technology or the global ‘risk society’ that affect all the state’s foreign and security policy on a global scale, *ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁷⁵ Gerry Kearns, “Naturalising Empire: Echoes of Mackinder for the Next American Century?” *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): pp. 74-98.

¹⁷⁶ Natalia Morozova, “Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin,” *Geopolitics* 14, no. 4 (2009), pp. 667-686.

¹⁷⁷ Marcus Power & Andrew Crampton, eds, *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007). J. P. Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War*.

¹⁷⁸ Leslie Hepple, quoted in Kelly, p. 37.

American grand strategy as geopolitical discourse: Constructing the role and position of the United States in world politics

In using a critical geopolitics perspective, the thesis is able to widen and deepen the understanding of American grand strategy from a conventional formulation of a national security agenda to a geopolitical discourse that seeks to define the country's role and position in world politics. Within such a discourse, issues of national security and military power are bound up with concepts of world order and national identity, together forming the geopolitical vision of grand strategy. John Ruggie, although not specifically invoking geopolitics, refers indirectly to this geopolitical identity when he ties the strategies of engagement American leaders pursued in 1919, 1945, and in the early Cold War years to a transformative vision of world order that appealed to the American public because it reflected the 'principles of domestic order at play in America's understanding of its own founding, in its own sense of political community.'¹⁷⁹

Andrew Bacevich in his critical history of American foreign policy links its dominating theme, a grand strategy of 'openness' to the economic and political liberalism at the core of the American project.¹⁸⁰ The construction of a geopolitical identity with the distinct notion of spatial separation against an 'Other,' which is a source of threat and danger to national security is a key point critical geopolitics offers for an analysis of the formulation of grand strategy. To make the themes of geopolitics understood, simple dichotomies reduce the complexity of reality; the

¹⁷⁹ John Gerard Ruggie, "The Past as Prologue?," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (1997): p. 89; see also John Gerard Ruggie, *Winning the Peace America and World Order in the New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)

¹⁸⁰ Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 79-116.

world is explained in terms of collective identities, the language of 'Us' and 'Them', 'friends and allies' vs. 'terrorists' and 'enemy combatants' populates geopolitical narratives.

Geopolitics provides an interpretation of space and world politics translated into words and images, from 'Saving Private Ryan' to President Bush landing on an aircraft carrier greeted by a banner pronouncing 'Mission accomplished.' These narratives have an affect, from mobilizing public support for war to providing engaging entertainment, because they spur the popular imagination and invoke a common identity.¹⁸¹ Even if we are not Americans, we are meant to identify with the United States, because in the script of geopolitics they play the part of hero, defending freedom and democracy against evil villains, from 'Islamic terrorists' to 'Russian Communists.'¹⁸² Dalby sees this identity ascribing and border drawing function as main feature of geopolitical discourse. In *International Relations* David Campbell subscribes to a similar view in his critical analysis of American foreign policy.¹⁸³ "(...) the constitution of identity is achieved through the inscription of boundaries that serve to demarcate an 'inside' from an 'outside', a 'self' from an 'other', a 'domestic' from a 'foreign'."¹⁸⁴ Based on case study on the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), Dalby shows how the texts of this group of neoconservative political analysts reflected a particular geopolitical interpretation of

¹⁸¹ They can also provoke rejection and criticism of course.

¹⁸² Simon Dalby gives an illustrative account of the 'villain of the day' in the techno thrillers of Tom Clancy, set at the end of the Cold War and the early post-Cold War era that reproduce this geopolitical, Manichean narrative of good vs. evil, cf., Simon Dalby "Imperialism, Domination, Culture: The Continued Relevance of Critical Geopolitics," *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (2008): pp. 413-436.

¹⁸³ Campbell, *Writing Security*.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

the Cold War, which would later be influential in shaping the foreign policy of the Reagan administration.¹⁸⁵

The omnipresent threatening 'Other' is simultaneously used to explain the external, geopolitical reality of the Cold War and to declare other alternative formulations for the national security of the United States invalid.¹⁸⁶ The national experience of time and space at the center of a geopolitical identity is thus juxtaposed with the experience of time and space of other nations. Such interpretations can stress both togetherness and friendship or distinction and enmity.¹⁸⁷

A key category for a critical analysis of American grand strategy then is the concept of geopolitical identity.¹⁸⁸ It is difficult to mark a clear distinction between 'national' and 'geopolitical' identity, yet the thesis argues that the former entails a broader

¹⁸⁵ Dalby, "American security discourse: the persistence of geopolitics," pp. 261-283; Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War* (New York: Guilford Press, 1990). The Soviet Union serves as the distinctive 'Other', the adversary that requires the constant vigilance of the United States and necessities the American national security apparatus. According to Dalby: "The ideological dimension is clearly present in how this is justified and explained and understood by the populations concerned; the 'Other' is seen different if not an enemy." Dalby, quoted in Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, p. 180.

¹⁸⁶ Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War*, p. 14. Such an identity construct can rely heavily on a particular interpretation of the 'Other's' historical, geographical and political development as Geoffrey Parker demonstrates, declaring a geopolitical model of dominance that is supposed to have guided Russian imperial expansionism since the days of the Kievan Russ, cf. Geoffrey Parker, *The Geopolitics of Domination* (London, New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁸⁷ In *Postwar* the historian Tony Judt describes how after the end of the Cold War the states of the former Communist bloc of Eastern and Central Europe wanted to 'return' to the timeline and space of a Europe, from which they had been violently cut off by the 'Asiatic' Soviet Union. In Germany the historical and geographical identity of the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist on October 3rd 1990, its territory incorporated into the Federal Republic. These are just two examples for the fact that while the perception and interpretation of geopolitical identity is usually marked by continuity we should not mistake that for stasis, spaces can be reorganized, histories rewritten and identities changed, cf., Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), pp. 749-776.

¹⁸⁸ A common thread in the critical geopolitics literature is that identity is defined by the imagined community of the nation state, and that geography and history play a significant role in its formation. For a range of essays on the role of geography for national identity, see David Hooson, ed, *Geography and National Identity* (Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994). See also Colin S. Gray, *The geopolitics of super power* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), pp. 39-52. "The political behavior of a country is the reflection of that country's history; and that [...] history is in great part [...] the product of its geographical setting." Ibid., p 43. For Ó Tuathail national identity discourses are one of the sources of geopolitical imagination, which in turn inform and construct geopolitical discourses, cf. Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*; Dalby and Campbell see the production and reproduction of identity through discourse at the very core of geopolitics or foreign policy respectively; cf. Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War*; Campbell, *Writing Security*; for Gertjan Dijkink geopolitical vision is the translation of national identity concepts into geographical terms and symbols. Gertjan Dijkink, *National Identity & Geopolitical Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996).

spectrum of representations of the nation as an ‘imagined community’, from national symbols like the Statue of Liberty, Rock’n Roll, or Baseball to central cultural and historical narratives, ranging from the Gettysburg Address to the myth of the American frontier and the Wild West. Geopolitical identity, while drawing from these sources, has a narrower outlook, specifically concerned with locating the ‘Self’ of the United States in a world political context, that is primarily vis-à-vis the ‘Otherness’ of other nation states in the international system. It is in this context where representations like ‘indispensable nation,’ or ‘American exceptionalism’ dominate in delineating ‘America’ as a special and unique entity, unlike any other nation on earth.

The ‘geographical imagination’ of nations, like ‘middle kingdom’, ‘indispensable nation,’ or ‘splendid isolation’ are powerful images because they create a label for a distinctive national experience, separate from others and constant through history, that every new generation can relate to and accept as source of identity.¹⁸⁹ John Agnew describes how in the case of the United States “(...) exceptionalist arguments offer much the same way of justification today as they did in the early 19th century.”¹⁹⁰ For Geoffrey Sloan the ideas of Social Darwinism, the experience of an ever-expanding frontier and the ascent to superpower status after 1945 are the key elements that have influenced geopolitical thinking and the perceptions and actions of policy makers in the United States.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Ó Tuathail and Dalby, “Introduction,” in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ John Agnew, “An excess of ‘national exceptionalism’: towards a new political geography of American foreign policy,” *Political Geography Quarterly* 2 (1983), p. 151.

¹⁹¹ Geoffrey Sloan, *Geopolitics in United States Strategic Policy, 1890-1987* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988), p. 225.

In order to operate geopolitical identity as a useful concept within the framework of a discourse analysis it is vital to demonstrate, not just that identity exists, but how it matters. A point that Tuomas Forsberg stated in a similar fashion, when he declared that it is not enough to declare territory as socially constructed but that we must demonstrate:

(...) how the constructions have been established in particular contexts and how they change, and finding out in what way and why the constructions differ from the norm or other similar contexts rather than describe the constructions and assert that they matter.¹⁹²

The thesis conceptualizes American grand strategy as a geopolitical discourse, a vision of national security that reflects a particular worldview of identity, power, order and threat. This discourse is constructed from the dominant strands of geopolitical imagination existing in the United States. One of the main tasks in investigating the discursive performance of American grand strategy during the Obama presidency is thus to analyze if and how constructs of geopolitical identity — defined as the perception and interpretation of the national experience of America in a world political context —continue or change over time.¹⁹³

Such an analysis must therefore include the study of historical narratives, the ‘mode of discourse’ used to represent reality, as Hayden White calls it, and how historic events are used in symbolic discourses to declare a certain reality ‘real’ and ‘true’.¹⁹⁴

James Der Derian has demonstrated this exemplarily in his decoding of the U.S.

¹⁹² Tuomas Forsberg, “The Ground without Foundation: Territory as a Social Construct,” *Geopolitics* 8, no. 2 (2003): p. 20.

¹⁹³ This does not suggest that we can employ Braudel to construct grand strategy either from a *histoire événementielle* of significant events, like the fall of the Berlin Wall or 9/11, or deduct it from the general course, the *lounge durée* of American History, but that we look how the story of grand strategy is being told differently at different times. On history as story, see also Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University press, 1978); on *histoire événementielle* and the *lounge durée*, see Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean*. Vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

¹⁹⁴ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 31. See also Christian Reus-Schmidt, “Reading History through the Constructivist’s Eye,” *Millennium* 37, no. 2 (2008): pp. 395-414.

National Security Strategy of 2002, which directly invoked the terror attacks of 9/11 to construct a new American reality of a ‘war to rid the world of evil.’¹⁹⁵ Stuart Croft has detailed how the historic event of 9/11 was discursively transformed into the ‘war on terror,’ not as an isolated act of political decision-making, but as a boarder cultural process that established it as common sense and generally accepted knowledge.¹⁹⁶

This means that the story and history of American grand strategy is also a genealogy in the sense of Foucault, that it is constructed against marginalized knowledge, discontinuities and ruptures as “(...) the claim of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchize, and order (...) in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects.”¹⁹⁷ In this regard there is also no inherent difference between history and fiction, since the construction of political and historical discourse also relies on achieving convincing storytelling.¹⁹⁸ Ronald Reagan for example was reportedly quite disappointed, when he learned that the White House did not possess a ‘War Room,’ as featured in *Dr. Strangelove*.¹⁹⁹ This connection between fictional narratives and the political imagination of national security will be explored in particular in the following chapter, dealing with Hollywood films and popular geopolitics.

Finally, the thesis has to consider the ‘imagined spaces’ of American grand strategy discourse, the spatialization of national security, which is expressed in such

¹⁹⁵ James Der Derian, “Decoding The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” *Boundary 2* 3, no. 30 (2003): pp. 19-27.

¹⁹⁶ Croft, *Culture, Crisis, and America’s War on Terror*.

¹⁹⁷ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 83.

¹⁹⁸ Cf., *ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁹⁹ Dewe Mathews, “To the war room!,” *The Guardian*, November 14, 2001, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2001/nov/14/artsfeatures1>.

constructs as ‘forward presence,’ ‘full spectrum dominance,’ or the ‘global commons.’²⁰⁰ Here, the grand strategy discourse localizes friendly spaces and spheres of influence of the United States, represented as ‘allies and partners,’ it demarcates threats, such as ‘rouge states,’ and it engages in projections of the global distribution of power and influence in the world, as for example in the *Global Trends* series by the National Intelligence Council of the United States. As Ó Tuathail has remarked: “All states are territorial and all foreign policy strategizing and practice is conditioned by territoriality, shaped by geographical location, and informed by certain geographical understandings about the world.”²⁰¹ Jan Nijman refers in this context to the American spatialization of threat by prominent ‘intellectuals of statecraft’.

American debates about superpower competition were overshadowed for decades by the belief among geostrategic thinkers, such as Gray or Brzezinski, that the Soviet Union held a superior geopolitical position in the Eurasian heartland.²⁰²

Finally, beyond a national construction of identity, history and space, it should not be ignored that American grand strategy also reflects a product of Western political thought, philosophical traditions, and cultural attitudes that embeds it in a wider framework of geopolitical thinking as for example explored by John Agnew.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ This also includes the concept of space itself, from the traditional conceptualization of land and sea power to the involvement of outer space, and the extension of spatial projections into virtual or cyber space as an extension of the scope and reach of geostrategic power available to the United States, see for example Robert S. Ross, “China’s Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response,” *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): 46-81; Natalie Bormann and Michael Sheehan, eds, *Securing Outer Space* (London: Routledge, 2009); Steven L. Spiegel “Traditional space vs. cyberspace: The changing role of geography in current international politics,” *Geopolitics* 5, no. 3 (2000): pp. 114-125.

²⁰¹ Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Understanding Critical Geopolitics,” in *Geopolitics Geography and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London, Portland: Frank Cass, 1999): 109.

²⁰² Jan Nijman, *The Geopolitics of Power & Conflict – Superpowers in the International System 1945-1992* (London: Belhaven Press, 1993), p. 78. Mark Polelle makes a similar argument when he observes that: “In the minds of these security intellectuals, the U.S.S.R had inherited the mantle of the threatening land power once represented by Germany while the U.S. had taken on Britain’s role as the leading seapower seeking nobly to contain this threat.” Mark Polelle, *Raising Cartographic Consciousness – The Social and Foreign Policy Vision of Geopolitics in the Twentieth Century* (Lanham: Lexington, 1999), p. 139.

²⁰³ John Agnew has examined how a Western geopolitical imagination has been shaped by four key principles: First, a global vision or one world thinking that emerged from the age of discoveries with the expansion of the European empires, the onset of transnational commerce and the dynamic development of scientific progress. This

In summary, a deeper and wider understanding of American grand strategy requires its analysis as geopolitical discourse, and how the temporal and spatial constructions of geopolitical identity interact with the formulation of national security policy in defining the role of the United States in world politics.

Conclusion

Critical security studies and critical geopolitics acknowledge the significance of human imagination and the impact of identity in constructing our political and social reality. This critical insight into the production of knowledge about the world and a state's role and position in it allows the thesis to analyze American grand strategy through a wider lens than previously attempted. So far research on grand strategy in International Relations literature has predominantly focused on a positivist ontology and epistemology in addressing the subject. This has largely reduced the understanding of grand strategy to a neutral-scientific process, concerned with the allocation of material resources, the assessment of outcomes, and the matching of

also gave rise to objectifying the world to a 'view from nowhere', enabling a particular perspective to claim universal legitimacy and rational objectivity. Secondly, the spatialization of time. The global significance first of Europe and then the United States made their political, economic and social models and historic experience the standard of modernity, relegating the rest of the world to a state of backwardness, strikingly expressed in the terms First, Second or Third World. The West became the pacemaker of progress, the universal model of development to be emulated and imitated. Thirdly, the origin of the nation state in Europe made this particular form of political organization of territory and society the central actor of geopolitics. With it the notions of sovereignty, territoriality and the distinction of domestic vs. foreign affairs became prevalent in our understanding of how global space should be politically organized. Finally, the organization of space into territories controlled by states pursuing their security interests in constant competition against each other led to the dominance of a conflict-centered view of world politics. Hence the contest of great powers and the pursuit of hegemony dominated in geopolitics. Agnew sees these principles of geopolitical imagination as constant factors, at the same time he identifies three 'Ages of Geopolitics' in which these principles have been articulated in particular and distinctive ways, from the 'civilizational geopolitics' of European empire in the 18th and 19th century to the 'naturalized geopolitics' of the heartland and Lebensraum theories to the 'ideological geopolitics' of the Cold War, cf., Agnew, *Geopolitics*, pp. 85-114. Agnew only hints at what age of geopolitics could have followed the Cold War, but globalization and multipolarity seem to him like powerful contenders for defining geopolitics at the beginning of the 21st century, cf., pp. 115-127 For Donald Snow economic matters "may become the [new] servant of geopolitics;" quoted in Kelly, p. 27. The Marxist tradition of critical geopolitics, less influenced by post-structuralism, is particularly concerned with the impact of economic globalization and the effects of American hegemony in ordering global space. See for example Immanuel Wallerstein, *Geopolitics and Geoculture* (Cambridge: University Press, 1991); David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2001).

means and ends, narrowly focused on the equation of military power and national security as the absence of threat.

Here, the thesis has identified a gap in the literature, stemming from omitting issues of discourse and identity, which profoundly influence the definition of security and the making of strategy. Incorporating concepts of critical security studies, and in particular critical geopolitics allows the thesis to go beyond these limitations, and to examine how American grand strategy, which frequently employs representations of identity such as ‘indispensable nation,’ ‘American exceptionalism,’ or ‘command of the commons’ constitutes a dominant form of knowledge that articulates a geopolitical vision, an American worldview. Grand strategy then goes beyond the calculation of means and ends, the narrow definition of national security and the preeminence of military power, it articulates a worldview of American origin and objectifies global space to the projection of American perceptions of geopolitical identity and world politics. In looking at who is shaping the discourses, that is to say who is telling which story of grand strategy, the thesis attempts to provide a better understanding how a particular view of the world is fundamental in making this world.

This opens the discussion of grand strategy to include processes of human perception and interpretation, which find expression in stories and images of space and power, order and threat. The geopolitical imagination that is expressed in popular, formal and practical discourses about the role of United States in the world, the threats it faces, and the international order it seeks has profound implications for the formulation of national security policy. Implications that are felt around the globe,

from the Iraq invasion to the Syria conflict, and that will have a profound impact on the future of world politics in the 21st century. For better or worse, we live in a world that has been shaped by American power and American ideas. Thus, we should pay close attention how under the Obama presidency, the course of the United States in the world has been debated, how America's global leadership role has been confirmed and contested and by whom, and what this potentially means for the future of international relations in the years to come.

2. Filming hegemony - Popular geopolitics and the cinematic production of national security

The Pentagon is a church. And the soldiers are the priests.¹ – Oliver Stone

Critically investigating grand strategy as geopolitical vision of America's role in the world has maybe no better starting point than Hollywood. For more than a century the American film industry has perfected the making and re-making of America's image for domestic and foreign audiences, making it a chronicler of the American experience, and a key producer of the popular, geopolitical imagination in the United States.

As Virgine Mamadouh and Gertjan Dijkink have stated: "Only very powerful or hegemonic states can link geopolitical visions with an international power practice, changing world order."² However, while the overwhelming majority of International Relations literature has focused on the aspects of material capabilities and the distribution of power in analyzing American grand strategy practice, and its impact on the international system, little attention has been paid to representations, narratives and imaginations, the geopolitical vision, grand strategy constitutes.

Approaching American grand strategy from a critical perspective, this chapter will look at the production and representation of dominant knowledge in relation to American power, geopolitical identity and national security in popular discourse and

¹ Oliver Stone, interviewed for TV broadcast "Hollywood and the War Machine," *Al Jazeera*, August 9, 2012, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2010/12/2010121681345363793.html>.

² Virgine Mamadouh and Gertjan Dijkink, "Geopolitics, International Relations and Political Geography: The Politics of Geopolitical Discourse," *Geopolitics* 11, no. 3 (2006): pp. 349-366.

how the popularization of these themes relates to key grand strategy discourses of America's role world politics. Building on a growing literature in critical geopolitics and International Relations this widens the scope of what is traditionally considered to be the study of grand strategy, by looking at the production and representation of national security in popular culture, and specifically the realm of Hollywood film, as well as the formulation of American geopolitics in bestselling non-fiction books.

This analytical approach follows from the theoretical conceptualization of grand strategy as geopolitical vision and the intertextuality of geopolitical knowledge.³ If a grand strategy discourse is to engage the geopolitical imagination of the nation and provide orientation for 'what goes on in the world', it cannot be the sole undertaking of isolated elite circles in politics and academia. The plausibility of elite representations of geopolitical identity also relies on their understanding in the population and their intertextual compatibility with popular knowledge.⁴

This draws our attention to the role of popular culture in producing the 'common sense' of everyday experience.⁵ Popular culture provides key discursive sites within the wider cultural and societal context of geopolitics and national security, where deep-seated representations of geopolitical identity are formulated and permanently reconstituted.⁶ When they interrelate with practical discourses of grand strategy, popular representations can thus help to produce and sustain a legitimized, understood version of geopolitical reality, defining the role and place of the United

³ See Ó Tuathail and Dalby, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Geopolitics* pp. 1-7.

⁴ Jutta Weldes, "Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action, and Popular Culture." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no 1 (1999): pp. 117-134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶ See Hansen, p. 62.

States in the world. The close cooperation of the Pentagon and Hollywood is one striking example where popular representations and political-military practices intersect in this way. Through the production of film, images of national security, military power and the role of the Armed Forces are projected and promoted to a global audience for entertainment purposes, sustaining and reflecting in turn dominant grand strategy narratives employed by the U.S. defense establishment.

Following the ‘cultural turn’ in international relations, the study of popular culture has revealed the numerous connections between the supposedly real world of politics, power, and security, and what is generally considered to lie outside the scope of appropriate IR research, the mundane world of our daily experiences, narratives, imagination, media reflections and the make-believe world of entertainment.⁷

Treating popular culture as a legitimate subject of study for IR scholarship, this research employs a critical perspective that rejects a strict dichotomy between grand strategy as the sole realm of military power and political calculation, and film as the politically irrelevant world of entertainment and fiction. “Culture is political, and politics is cultural.”⁸ To examine the connection of film and grand strategy is to acknowledge the political significance of storytelling in creating a commonly shared truth. Both film and strategy then focus on the imagination of power as much as they

⁷ Stuart Croft has explored the role of popular culture in the narrative shift from 9/11 to the ‘War on Terror,’ cf. Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*; for the use of film in the critical analysis of International Relations theory and its foundational myths see Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory*. Second Edition (Oxon: Routledge, 2007); Jutta Weldes has worked on the mutual interconnections of international relations and the fictional worlds of fantasy and science fiction, see for example Jutta Weldes, ed, *To Seek Out New Worlds. Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Christina Rowley and Jutta Weldes, “The Evolution of International Security Studies and the Everyday: Suggestions from the Buffyverse,” SPAIS, University of Bristol, Working Paper No.11-12

⁸ Cynthia Weber, *Imagining America at War* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 188.

rely on the power of images. This duality of power and image was remarkably illustrated when President George W. Bush landed on an aircraft carrier to announce the ending of major combat operations in Iraq; he seemed to deliberately invoke a *Top Gun* moment for the world to watch America's might. The message was clear: Just like Tom Cruise in his F-14, the President had successfully defeated America's enemies.

Incorporating popular culture into a discourse analysis of grand strategy follows the reformulation of power and strategy in the context of critical security studies that has thought to use the insight of post-structuralism to challenge the dominant realist discourse.⁹ Jutta Weldes for example has explored how the multiple interconnections between real-life events, such as the Reagan-era SDI program, globalization, or the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), and the imagined worlds of science fiction question the 'great divide' of high politics and popular culture.¹⁰

Popular culture then is neither irrelevant nor dismissible, but one of the sites where power is produced and reproduced.¹¹ However, popular culture cannot only sustain dominant definitions of world politics but also critique and question existing representations. Sometimes both confirmation and contestation can occur simultaneously. The 2004 *Team America: World Police* for example can be interpreted as a movie satire of gung-ho American jingoism, the War on Terror,

⁹ Michael Sheehan, *International Security: An analytical Survey* (Boulder: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 2005), pp. 133-149.

¹⁰ Jutta Weldes, "Popular Culture, Science Fiction, and World Politics," in: Jutta Weldes ed. *To Seek Out New Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): pp. 1-27.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Hollywood liberalism, Islamic terrorists, and the North-Korean nuclear threat all at the same time. As Weldes points out:

Whether a particular popular cultural text supports or undermines existing relations of power, or both at once, examining such texts helps us to highlight the working of power.¹²

The imagination of popular culture provides a background of meaning and understanding of geopolitics, foreign and security policy that audiences, critics and state officials alike connect with. “SDI becomes ‘Star Wars’ for its detractors, and then also for its defenders.”¹³

The individual films selected for this chapter have been chosen according to three criteria. First, the analysis deals with films that were produced in the United States of America and released during the period of the presidency of Barack Obama covered by the thesis (January 2009 - August 2014). Second, the films selected, centrally involve a plot about a perceived threat to the national security of the United States and the actions undertaken to counter such a threat, focusing the analysis on the ‘national security cinema’ during the Obama presidency and its representation of American geopolitical identity during that timeframe. Thirdly, all the films, have been selected from the 50 highest grossing films released in the United States in each year, suggesting a certain level of popularity and cultural presence for these pop cultural artifacts. The only exception, *The Messenger* has been chosen due to its production receiving direct support from the Pentagon. Here, the thesis attempts a critical analysis of how a dominant popular geopolitical imagination is being produced by combing a study of representational features with the materiality of box office results and budget figures. Hence, it is in particular the attempt to uncover a

¹² Ibid., p. 7.

¹³ Ibid.

dominant, popular imagination of geopolitical identity and national security that motivates the research in this chapter. At the same time, the identification of such a dominant identity construct is then further examined and tested against the other discursive sites examined in the thesis, further elaborating if a ‘big picture’ of America’s role in the world has been constructed that fulfills the demands for a grand strategy of coherence and consistency. Thus, the thesis considers in particular commercially successful genres within the context of the national security cinema, such as science-fiction films, and not films that have largely failed to capture audience’s attention in bringing America to the big screen.

The cinematic production of national security for entertainment purposes, realized in multi-million dollar films can be seen as a framework of reference for the popular imagination, one that illustrates the leverage of certain discursive formations over others in attaining ‘common sense’ status. The representations of geopolitical identity in the films surveyed in this thesis, testify to an enduring popularity of the themes of American heroism and global leadership, military superiority, and external threat endangering the existence of the United States. Counter-narratives to this basic Manichean narrative of American exceptionalism and militarism in popular movies also exist, for example when films feature threats to the United States emerging from out-of-control government surveillance efforts, rouge secret intelligence operations and military programs. However, predominantly these narrative constructs function as outliers and disruptors to the general notion of American exceptionalism, military prowess and the defensive nature of the United States.

The dominant, Manichean narrative of national security in Hollywood film then is closest to the geopolitical vision of American hegemony; a powerful and globally engaged United States is fighting Evil on behalf of the nation and the world. This questions the pervasiveness of existing alternative grand strategy narratives in formal and practical discourses, and their ability to touch on the popular geopolitical imagination through the medium of film. It seems that in Hollywood, hegemony dies hard.

Critical geopolitics, film and popular narratives of grand strategy

Among the majority of political commentators and International Relations literature, consensus is that American hegemony, or primacy was the defining feature of U.S. foreign and security policy in the post-Cold War period, especially pronounced following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.¹⁴ Subsequently, this narrative of American hegemony as powerful leader and global military force has been observed in numerous Hollywood films from *Independence Day* (1996) to *Black Hawk Down* (2001).¹⁵ Hollywood represents a global cultural icon and one of the United States' most prevailing sources of 'soft power,' as well as an important factor in the American economy.¹⁶ According to the Guardian, in 2011 the American film

¹⁴ See Clark, pp. 23-28, Ikenberry, "American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror;" Christopher Layne, "The Waning of U.S. Hegemony – Myth or Reality? A Review Essay," *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): pp. 147-172; Efstathios T. Fakiolas and Tassos Fakiolas, "Pax Americana or Multilateralism? Reflecting on the United States' Grand Strategic Vision of Hegemony in the Wake of the 11 September Attacks," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (2007): pp. 53-86; Kristol and Kagan, pp. 18-32.

¹⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, "The new Rome is not the new Greece yet, but the U.S. must look to its laurels," *Guardian*, June 29, 2012, accessed September 12, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jun/29/america-must-look-to-its-laurels>. Simon Dalby, "Warrior geopolitics: Gladiator, Black Hawk Down and The Kingdom Of Heaven," *Political Geography* 27, no. 4 (2008): pp. 439-455.

¹⁶ Which does not mean of course that Hollywood cannot produce heavy resistance against what some perceive as cultural invasion and Americanization.

industry has earned \$40.8bn domestically and \$88.8bn worldwide.¹⁷ The global presence of American-made movies, DVDs, Blue-rays, soundtracks and merchandising is unrivalled. This impressive cultural machine, combining substantial capital investment, creative talent and technical sophistication has perfected a particular style of storytelling that has set a global standard for cinematic narrative.¹⁸

A reliable genre that film producers regularly return to in the pursuit of profit is the cinematic representation of the American superpower, and how it counters existential threats to its national security. This makes Hollywood a filmic ‘chronicler of American empire,’ as the American journalist Chris Hedges puts it, its films celebrating the ‘virtue and power’ of the United States.¹⁹ The critical and multiple Academy Award winning filmmaker Oliver Stone sees Hollywood ‘selling the idea that America is militarily successful’ through films like *Pearl Harbor* (2000), or *Black Hawk Down* (2001).²⁰ In projecting visions of American military power to audiences across the globe, Hollywood is a prime source for analyzing the popular geopolitical imagination, where certain actions of states and individuals are legitimized and naturalized in the context of national security.²¹

¹⁷ Ben Child: “U.S. film industry set for four years of strong growth, predicts report,” *Guardian*, June 14, 2012, accessed August 8, 2014, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jun/14/us-film-industry-growth-forecast>.

¹⁸ See David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood tells it* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

¹⁹ Chris Hedges, interviewed for TV broadcast “Hollywood and the War Machine,” *Al Jazeera*, August 9, 2012, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2010/12/2010121681345363793.html>.

²⁰ Oliver Stone, interviewed by Al Jazeera, *ibid*.

²¹ Mark J. Lacy, “War, Cinema, and Moral Anxiety,” *Alternatives* 28, no. 5 (2003): p. 614. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the study of film in critical geopolitics and International Relations, focusing on the representations of national identity, global space and international power practices in film, the production of popular geopolitical discourse, the involvement of audiences in this discourse, and the contestation of dominant geopolitical narratives through cinematic aesthetics, see in particular, Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton, “Reel geopolitics: Cinemato-graphing Political Space,” *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (2005): pp. 193-203; Jason Dittmer, “American exceptionalism, visual effects, and the post-9/11 cinematic superhero boom,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 1 (2011): pp. 114-130; Jason Dittmer and Klaus Dodds, “Popular Geopolitics Past and Future: Fandom, Identities and Audiences,” *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (2008): pp. 437-457; Michael Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009).

In their introduction to a special issue of *Geopolitics* dealing with cinema and geopolitics, Marcus Power and Andrew Crampton, talking about American military-themed films released following 9/11, stress the popularity of these filmic narratives that confirmed a global military role of the United States in defense of national security. They argue that their success at the box office suggests the appeal of these films in times of cultural and political uncertainty, since they give the audience a clear vision of what goes on in the world.²² The cinema becomes a space where the ambiguity and complexity of world politics is replaced with certainty and simplicity.²³ A function similar to the one grand strategy is supposed to perform.

Hollywood films have dealt with the issues of national security, military power, American identity and war in numerous ways, predominantly in the genres of action-thrillers and war films.²⁴ Common to what Jean-Michel Valantin dubs the ‘national security cinema’ is the perception of threat as an existential danger to survival, security and order against which American power is mobilized; the narratives and visualizations of this theme then provide filmic representations of American grand strategy, from failed containment in Vietnam, to the reverberations of American primacy under George W. Bush. As Valantin notes:

The history of relationships between the American state and strategy is also that of communication between Washington and Hollywood, which constantly transforms the application of American strategic practices into cinematic accounts.”²⁵

This communication however entails not only the intertextuality of representations of national security and grand strategy narratives but also the institutionalized

²² Power and Crampton, pp. 193-194.

²³ Lacy, pp. 611-636.

²⁴ See Klaus Dodds, “Hollywood and the Popular Geopolitics of the War on Terror,” *Third World Quarterly* 29, no.8 (2008): pp. 1624-1625.

²⁵ Jean-Michel Valantin, *Hollywood, the Pentagon and Washington* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. xi.

cooperation between the Pentagon and Hollywood in the production of national security cinema and the military image of the United States.²⁶

Of course, it cannot be assumed that the popularity of these entertainment products is simply due to their particular geopolitical imagination, or indeed if such a geopolitical reading reaches the audience at all. The main purpose of a Hollywood film is to be enjoyed as entertainment and to make money. However, the thesis can note the respective conjunction of production value, geopolitical representation and box office success, and how these constellations change or continue over time. The continued involvement of the Pentagon in the production of Hollywood films for example suggest a conviction on behalf of the U.S. Department of Defense that the predominantly positive image of the American military created in these films reaches the audience and is a worthwhile investment for public relations and recruitment.

In a similar vein, the continued investment into certain geopolitical imaginations of American military power on film can be attributed to the conviction of movie producers that these films sell at the box office, justifying in turn further investment into similar products.²⁷ The thesis thus explores how in the cinematic discourse of national security, certain representations coincide with certain levels of capital investment and revenue, suggesting their popularity and common sense appeal. The circular flow of box office success, generic film production and capital investment is an often overlooked element in the analysis of popular geopolitics and widens the

²⁶ Cf., James Der Derian, *Virtuous War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001); David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004); Valantin; Lawrence H. Suid, *Guts & Glory*. Revised and Expanded Edition (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002).

²⁷ This however does not suggest a Frankfurt School understanding of cultural production in the analysis of popular geopolitics, where an ideological message is employed to manipulate and exploit audiences by the forces of capital; see in this context also Jason Dittmer, *Popular Culture, Geopolitics & Identity* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), pp. 28-29.

scope beyond purely representational perspective to include aspects of cultural economy in the evaluation of how film reflects a Foucauldian nexus of power/knowledge.²⁸

Another issue in the analysis of popular geopolitics is the question of audience reception, which Dittmer and Dodds suggest can benefit from greater attention and rigor in research on how audiences derive meanings from geopolitical narratives and how audiences themselves participate in the creation of meaning.²⁹ As Dittmer suggests in his analysis of audience responses to superhero movies on the Internet Movie Database, audiences primarily focus on aesthetic and artistic qualities in reviewing film, however themes such as military power or American exceptionalism are noticed and engaged with, albeit often in an indirect way.³⁰

While the question of audience responses is undoubtedly important, the research here is focused more on how Hollywood film creates a framework of reference for the popular geopolitical imagination of national security, and its connectivity to formal and practical discourses. As such it is interested more in patterns of production and representation, and what fictional material is offered to audiences, than the perception within audiences. As Ernest Giglio noted:

Even though audiences may not be aware of it, the most visible and common manifestation of the Hollywood-Washington connection takes place on the big screen where, in a fraction of the five- to six-hundred films that Hollywood releases annually to theatres, films are shown that contain

²⁸ Jason Dittmer has recently raised the issue of a greater attention to the role of cultural economy in the analysis of popular geopolitics; Dittmer, "American exceptionalism, visual effects, and the post-9/11 cinematic superhero boom".

²⁹ Dittmer and Dodds, pp. 437-457.

³⁰ Dittmer, "American exceptionalism, visual effects, and the post-9/11 cinematic superhero boom," pp. 124-126.

political messages or political themes that are ideological, propagandistic, historically misleading, or politically manipulative.³¹

Whether the audience picks up on one particular narrative of national security then seems less relevant than the variety, or lack thereof, that is offered to the audience to interpret and engage with in the first place. As Klaus Dodds has noted, the majority of Hollywood films exploring geopolitical themes are action-thrillers, and as such shape the expectations of audiences and producers, concerning plotlines, narratives and outcomes.³² “The ending is invariably conservative (...).”³³

In this regard, Hollywood as an industry focused on reliable revenue and tried formulas of success, is a powerful voice for the defense of the status quo.³⁴ As such, changes or continuities in the way Hollywood tells the story of national security are a powerful indicator for the way the American film industry perceives the status quo of American geopolitical identity in world politics.

³¹ Ernest Giglio, *Here's looking at you: Hollywood, Film & Politics*. Third Edition. (New York: Peterland, 2010), p. 12.

³² Dodds, “Hollywood and the Popular Geopolitics of the War on Terror.”

³³ Ibid., p. 1624.

³⁴ Giglio, p. 23.

Fig. 5 List of films surveyed:³⁵

Year	Title	U.S. Box Office / Production (est.)	Ranking	Threat Scenario
2009	<i>Avatar</i> ³⁶	\$749,766,139 \$237,000,000	1	Alien Invasion
2009	<i>Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen</i>	\$402,111,870 \$200,00,000	2	Alien Invasion
2009	<i>G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra</i>	\$150,201,498 \$175,000,000	18	Int. Terrorism / WMD Attack
2009	<i>Inglourious Basterds</i>	\$120,540,719 \$70,000,000	25	War / Foreign Enemy
2009	<i>The Messenger</i>	\$1,109,660 \$6,500,000	196	War / Foreign Enemy
2010	<i>Iron Man 2</i>	\$312,433,331 \$200,000,000	3	Domestic Crime / Foreign Infiltration
2010	<i>Salt</i>	\$118,311,368 \$110,000,000	22	Foreign Infiltration
2010	<i>R.E.D.</i>	\$90,380,162 \$58,000,000	28	Rouge CIA operation
2010	<i>The A-Team</i>	\$77,222,099 \$110,000,000	44	Rouge CIA operation
2010	<i>Knight & Day</i>	\$76,423,035 \$117,000,000	45	Rouge CIA operation

³⁵ The numbers for box office revenue are taken from Box Office Mojo, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com>; the numbers for estimated budgets and plot synopses are taken from the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.imdb.com>.

³⁶ Avatar does not feature a direct threat to U.S. national security, but has been chosen due its enormous popularity and because it is a widely cited example for a cinematic critique of U.S. foreign and security policy, in particular the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a critique that was officially confirmed as intentional by the author and director James Cameron. "James Cameron: 'Avatar' Is Political But It's Not Un-American," *The Huffington Post*, March 18, 2010, accessed October 12, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/14/james-cameron-avatar-is-p_n_423068.html.

2011	<i>Transformers: Dark of the Moon</i>	\$352,390,543 \$195,000,000	2	Alien Invasion
2011	<i>Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol</i>	\$209,397,903 \$145,000,000	7	Int. Terrorism / WMD Attack
2011	<i>Captain America: The First Avenger</i>	\$176,654,505 \$140,000,000	12	War / WMD Attack
2011	<i>X-Men: First Class</i>	\$146,408,305 \$160,000,000	17	War / Foreign Infiltration
2011	<i>Battle: Los Angeles</i>	\$83,552,429 \$70,000,000	37	Alien Invasion
2012	<i>Marvel's The Avengers</i>	\$623,357,910 \$220,000,000	1	Alien Invasion
2012	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i>	\$446,894,498 \$250,000,000	2	Int. Terrorism / WMD Attack
2012	<i>The Bourne Legacy</i>	\$112,870,105 \$125,000,000	18	Rouge Military Operation
2012	<i>Act of Valor</i>	\$70,012,847 \$12,000,000	27	Int. Terrorism / WMD Attack
2012	<i>Battleship</i>	\$65,233,400 \$209,000,000	30	Alien Invasion
2012	<i>The Expendables 2</i>	\$85,028,192 \$92,000,00	32	WMD Proliferation
2013	<i>Iron Man 3</i>	\$409,013,994 \$200,000,000	2	Domestic Crime / Int. Terrorism
2013	<i>Man of Steel</i>	\$291,045,518 \$225,000,000	5	Alien Invasion
2013	<i>G.I. Joe Retaliation</i>	\$122,523,060 \$130,000,000	25	Int. Terrorism / Foreign Infiltration

2013	<i>Captain Phillips</i>	\$107,100,855 \$55,000,000	32	Piracy
2013	<i>Olympus Has Fallen</i>	\$98,925,640 \$70,000,000	36	Int. Terrorism / Foreign Enemy
2013	<i>White House Down</i>	\$73,103,784 \$150,000,000	46	Domestic Terrorism / MIC
2014	<i>Captain America: The Winter Soldier</i>	\$257,842,261 \$170,000,000	1	Rouge Intellig. Operation
2014	<i>Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit</i>	\$50,577,412 \$60,000,000	30	Foreign Infiltration

Heroism, militarization and the representation of the geopolitical identity of the United States on screen

The issue of identity is maybe the one most comprehensively studied in the geopolitical analysis of Hollywood film. Joanne Sharp and Klaus Dodds for example have focused on the cinematic construction of gender, masculinity and patriotism, and how they write ‘America’s map of world order.’³⁷ Closely related, yet distinctive from these phenomena is the theme of heroism and militarization that we regularly encounter in the construction of identity in national security films and how they divide the American Self from the threatening Other.³⁸ In *Iron Man 2* (2010) and *Iron Man 3* (2013) for example it is the industrial and entrepreneur Tony Stark, who

³⁷ Joanne P. Sharp, “Reel geographies of the new world order: patriotism, masculinity, and geopolitics in post Cold War American movies,” in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, pp. 152-170; Klaus Dodds, “Gender, Geopolitics, and Contemporary Representations of National Security.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 38, no. 1 (2010): pp. 21-33.

³⁸ Marcus Power has demonstrated the link between visualization and militarization in the related subject of video games that allow the player to experience war from a first-person perspective and take on the role of hero, as he or she kills America’s enemies in an immersive 3-d environment, Marcus Power, “Digitized Virtuosity: Video War Games and Post-9/11 Cyber-Deterrence.” *Security Dialouge* 38, no. 2 (2007): pp. 271-288. As in the case of video games, films both entertain and legitimize military power and the geopolitical script of the United States as heroic defender of security.

thanks to his technological ingenuity is able to design and operate a weaponized high-tech armor, taking on the identity of Iron Man in the defense of America. Iron Man/Tony Stark represents a combination of military power, technological innovativeness and entrepreneurial spirit, displaying traits commonly associated with the United States, personified in the character of the superhero.³⁹

Fig. 6 *Iron Man 2* (2010)



Defending America together: U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. James 'Rhodey' Rhodes (Don Cheadle) and Tony Stark/Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.).⁴⁰

³⁹ *Iron Man 2* opens with a senate hearing that questions the reliability of Iron Man to provide national security to the United States since as an individual he is operating outside the national command structure and the authority of the Pentagon. Remarkably, in the real world the Pentagon decided not to give official support to the *Avengers* movie, apparently because of the unclear status of the supranational S.H.I.E.L.D organization in relation to the national command structure of the United States. The *Iron Man* franchise on the other hand received official support from the Pentagon, since the U.S. Air Force features prominently in these movies. Tony Stark's best friend is Lt. Col. James 'Rhodey' Rhodes, who in *Iron Man 2* takes on the identity of 'War Machine,' supporting Iron Man in fighting the film's main villain, the Russian scientist Ivan Vanko.

⁴⁰ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://www.beyondhollywood.com/uploads/2009/04/new-iron-man-2-6.jpg>.

The American superhero, heroic American soldier, or valiant secret agent who defends the United States against the ultimate threat of foreign attack through force is a theme that has been repeated in numerous popular films since the advent of the Obama presidency, for example in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (2009), *Transformers: Dark Side of the Moon* (2011), *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol* (2011), *Expendables 2* (2012), *Battleship* (2012), *Battle: Los Angeles* (2012), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), *Act of Valor* (2012), *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013), *Man of Steel* (2013), and *Jack Ryan: Shadow Recruit* (2014)

In all these examples we encounter what Der Derian has dubbed the ‘virtuous war’, the use of military power or violent force by the United States is morally unambiguous and righteous, surgically executed, successful and does neither produce collateral damage nor post-traumatic stress in the hero.⁴¹ America fights a good, clean fight in the combat of evil aliens and sinister terrorists. As Tom Pollard has noted, the glorification of American patriotism and militarism has not always been a staple feature of Hollywood film.

When the popular mood of the country seemed to favor pacifism or isolationism, as during the years immediately preceding both World Wars, films tended either to avoid war altogether or to reflect a certain abhorrence of military conflict itself.⁴²

However, ever since the entry of the United States in World War 2 and the emergence of the country as a global superpower the ‘good war’ narrative and representations of military heroism have continuously been produced and

⁴¹ See Der Derian, *Virtuous War*.

⁴² Tom Pollard, “The Hollywood War Machine,” *New Political Science* 24, no.1 (2002): p. 121.

reproduced.⁴³ Subsequent films in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, for example, such as *First Blood* (1982), or *We Were Soldiers* (2002), attempted to apply the ‘good war’ and ‘hero’ narrative to Vietnam, and successfully reformulated the theme of America’s heroic geopolitical identity, from *Top Gun* (1986) to *Independence Day* (1996), and *Behind Enemy Lines* (2001).⁴⁴ The mixed results and costly experience of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq seem to have done little to affect the popularity of this geopolitical image under President Obama. *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra* (2009) and its sequel *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* (2013) are perfect examples that display this on-going conjunction of heroism and militarism in popular Hollywood film. Based on an American 1980s cartoon series, G.I. Joe features a fictional, American led, but formally international, secret organization of Special Forces soldiers, engaged in a global struggle against the evil Cobra organization, which seeks world

⁴³ Examples for the continuity of the ‘good war narrative’ as constructed for World War II include for example, *Bataan* (1943), *The Longest Day* (1962), *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and *Red Tails* (2012). In contrast to the overwhelmingly positive imagination of the Second World War, Vietnam, a conflict whose legitimacy, conduct and purpose remains highly contested, presented a temporary break with this tradition. In its wake films like *M.A.S.H.* (1970) and *Catch-22* (1970) demystified the ‘good war’ narrative in front of the backdrop of Korea and World War 2, while films about Vietnam itself took a much more critical stance toward American military power, rewriting the script of the United States as innocent defender of world peace and American heroism, for example in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and *Platoon* (1986), which focus on the traumatizing effect of the war on the American soldiers and the chaos, nihilism and madness of war itself. See Suid, especially pp. 42-64; pp. 352-369, and pp. 556-617. Anti-war films such as *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Platoon* (1986) and *Deer Hunter* (1978) are among the most famous examples for films that are hailed for critically exploring the American involvement in the Vietnam War and its social and political implications, cf. Michael Anderegg, *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). Others deny an ‘anti-war’ quality to these films, describing for example *Apocalypse Now* as violent spectacle that does not question the legitimacy of the Vietnam War and is based on the representation of the enemy as the unknown ‘Other,’ see Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 462.

⁴⁴ See Geraóid Ó Tuathail, “The Frustrations of Geopolitics and the Pleasures of War: *Behind Enemy Lines* and American Geopolitical Culture,” *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (2005): pp. 356-377. During the 1980s films such as *Top Gun* (1986), the *Rambo* series (1982, 1985, 1988) or *Red Dawn* (1984) are widely cited as examples for a conservative resurgence in the United States under Ronald Reagan, emphasizing American military supremacy, patriotism and a renewed ideological determination in the Cold War confrontation against the Soviet Union, cf., Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Post-Modern* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 55-93. Lately, there have been various accounts of the fictional legacy of the Bush/Cheney administration, 9/11, the Global War on Terror and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in Hollywood, cf., Simon Dalby, “Warrior Geopolitics: *Gladiator*, *Black Hawk Down* and *The Kingdom of Heaven*,” *Political Geography* 27, no. 4 (2008): pp. 439-455; Dodds, “Hollywood and the Popular Geopolitics of the War on Terror;” Douglas Kellner, *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Cynthia Weber, *Imagining America at War* (Routledge: New York, 2007). Examples range from the 2001 production of *Pearl Harbor* (2001) and other ‘patriotic films’ following the terror attacks in New York and Washington, including *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *We Were Soldiers* (2002) and *The Sum of All Fears* (2002) to dark, pessimistic portraits of violence, nihilism and greed prevalent in American society in films such as *There will be Blood* (2008), *No Country for Old Men* (2008) or *The Dark Night* (2008), cf., Kellner, *Cinema Wars*, pp. 3-4; Weber, pp. 9-11; pp. 15-16.

domination. The motto of the original cartoon series captures the essence of this franchise: Every 'Joe' is 'a real American hero'.⁴⁵

Fig. 7 *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* (1985)



The inspiration for the movies: The 1985 military cartoon and toy line.⁴⁶

This popular display of American military power, and the virtuous heroes which embody the values the country is supposed to represent is in fact a staple of formal and popular discourses of hegemony, where 'American leadership' in the world is fundamentally based on its military might and the purpose behind its use. As President Obama explained at West Point in 2014: "America must always lead on the

⁴⁵ Some of G.I. Joe's members, unlike the original all-American cartoon cast, hail from other countries, most likely to increase the global box office appeal of this very American military toy line turned movie fantasy; cf., Betsy Sharkey, "Movie Review 'G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra'", *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 2009, accessed August 8, 2014, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/08/entertainment/et-gi-joe8>.

⁴⁶ Retrieved December 22, 2014, from <http://i74.servimg.com/u/f74/16/81/92/05/008210.gif>.

world stage. The military [...] is and always will be the backbone of that leadership.”⁴⁷

Maybe most ostentatiously, the theme of heroism and military power comes in the form of American superheroes as defenders of national security. In *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011) for example, the viewer encounters a fictional version of World War II, in which the United States is engaged in the development of a secret program, which can turn ordinary soldiers into super-powered individuals. The only soldier, who successfully undergoes this treatment, is Steve Rogers, who becomes the superhero Captain America, tasked to fight Nazis and the secret Hydra organization, led by the Nazi scientist Johann Schmidt, aka the Red Skull. In *Captain America* the United States fights a ‘good war’, virtually alone, against the very embodiment of Evil, and it is the heroic self-sacrifice of the soldier/hero Steve Rogers, who saves New York City from certain destruction by crashing the Red Skull’s WMD-armed bomber in the Arctic.

Captain America quite literally embodies the military heroism of the United States as he is clad in a costume version of the Stars and Stripes. As Jason Dittmer has elaborated in his work on the Captain America comic books, significant to Captain America’s role in the process of popularizing geopolitical narratives is his ability to connect the individual experience of the hero to ‘political projects of American nationalism, international order, and foreign policy.’⁴⁸ The Captain fights for

⁴⁷ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony,” May 28, 2014, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-west-point-academy-commencement-ceremony>.

⁴⁸ Jason Dittmer, “Captain America’s Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, no. 3 (2005): p. 627.

America, but he also is America. American heroes like Iron Man, the G.I. Joes and Captain America are testament to the enduring myth of American exceptionalism in the geopolitical imagination of the United States, and the heroic individualism of its people. As the film critics A. O. Scott and Manohla Dargis have written:

On one level the allure of comic book movies is obvious, because, among other attractions, they tap into deeply rooted national myths, including that of American Eden (Superman's Smallville); the Western hero (who's separate from the world and also its savior); and American exceptionalism (that this country is different from all others because of its mission to make 'the world safe for democracy,' as Woodrow Wilson and, I believe, Iron Man, both put it.⁴⁹

The United States is an outstanding force for good in the world, and it produces outstanding individuals that embody its values, and who sometimes have to enforce them against 'evildoers' and 'enemies of freedom' as for example Robert Kagan, George W. Bush and Barack Obama would put it.⁵⁰ As Caroline Kennedy has remarked: "Opposition to 'Evil' has marked American foreign policy for much of the twentieth and twenty-first century."⁵¹

And time and again highly popular films confirm this worldview of American exceptionalism and Manichean simplicity when they show the virtues of American freedom, liberty, and independence under threat by enemies who wish to attack, suppress or destroy the United States. Furthermore, these enemies are oftentimes presented not only as enemies of the United States, but of freedom itself, and as menace to the survival of the entire planet. The evil Decepticons in the *Transformers*

⁴⁹ A. O. Scott and Manohla Dargis, "Super-Dreams of an Alternate World Order," *New York Times*, June 27, 2012, accessed August 15, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/movies/the-amazing-spider-man-and-the-modern-comic-book-movie.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 See also.

⁵⁰ Cf., Manuel Perez-Rivas, "Bush vows to rid the world of 'evil-doers'," *CNN*, September 16, 2001, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/U.S./09/16/gen.bush.terrorism/>; Kagan, "Not Fade Away: Against the Myth of American Decline;" Obama, "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address," January 24, 2012.

⁵¹ Caroline Kennedy, "The Manichean temptation: Moralising rhetoric and the invocation of evil in U.S. foreign policy," *International Politics* 50, no. 5 (2013): p. 624.

series, or the aliens in *Battleship* and *Avengers* all function as the ultimate despotic Other, against which the American geopolitical identity of freedom-loving heroism and world leadership is displayed.

The same role of ultimate otherness has been fulfilled in the past by representations of Germans and Japanese in World War 2, Russians and Communists during the Cold War, or rouge states and Islamic terrorists before and after 9/11.⁵² In the enduring geopolitical script of Hollywood, the United States must use its formidable military power or extraordinary militarized superheroes in order to prevent invasion and preserve its freedom. An image invoked again in the 2012 top blockbuster *Marvel's The Avengers*. In the film it is the combination of heroic individualism and military high-tech that saves the day for America and the world, when Iron Man uses a nuclear warhead to destroy the interstellar portal that allows the attacking aliens to invade New York City. The *Avengers* is a perfect example for the enduring popularity of cinematic narratives that weave together themes of exceptionalism, heroism and military power as force for good that tap deep into the mythical identity of 'America' as defender of freedom.

⁵² See for example Pollard, "The Hollywood War Machine." Sally Totman has written an extensive study on the construction of 'rouge states' in Hollywood cinema as the Other, replacing the Soviet Union in the role of the enemy following the end of the Cold War; cf., Sally Totman, *How Hollywood Projects Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Fig. 8 *Marvel's The Avengers* (2012)



The Avengers defend New York City (from left to right: Black Widow – Scarlett Johansson; Thor – Chris Hemsworth; Captain America – Chris Evans, Hawkeye – Jeremy Renner, Iron Man – Robert Downey Jr., Hulk – Mark Ruffalo).⁵³

Hollywood, the Pentagon and the cinematic production of national security

The popular narrative of the United States as defender of national and global security is centrally linked to the cinematic representation of American military power and superiority. The U.S. Department of Defense is actively involved in promoting and projecting this popular imagination of American geopolitical identity as the world's leading superpower through its entertainment industry liaison. This longstanding cooperation between the Pentagon and Hollywood has been institutionalized through the Office of Public Relations and the Special Assistant for Entertainment Media of the Department of Defense, a position currently held by former U.S. Navy Colonel Phillip M. Strub. Individual liaison offices for the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Army, the

⁵³ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-e2XFpTa5wg8/T7OCyucIc_I/AAAAAAAAADWA/p_L37M_E614/s1600/The-Avengers-Marvel-Movie-Image-412-11.jpg.

U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force are located in Los Angeles. Their frequent involvement in contemporary film productions shows that the Department of Defense and the Armed Forces are not just a passive service provider to the film industry, but in fact have an active part in the process of filmmaking.⁵⁴ Officially, the criteria the Armed Forces and the Pentagon apply to determine if they can provide support for a film are ‘accuracy’ and ‘realism.’ The portrayal on film is supposed to reflect a realistic image of the U.S. military and its role in defense of American national security.

The actual support provided to film productions can include technical advice by active or former members of the Armed Forces, the lending of military hardware, such as tanks or helicopters, the provision of military personnel as extras, or shooting on location at military installations. This service can save a production substantial costs, but also allows the Pentagon great leverage in maintaining a positive image of the American military in the films it cooperates with.⁵⁵ This relationship has been described by insiders as ‘mutual exploitation.’⁵⁶ Hollywood obtains access to military hardware it would otherwise have to rent on the free market for substantially higher prices. The Pentagon in return reaps the public relations benefits from starring its technology and soldiers in big blockbusters where America’s military heroes save

⁵⁴ The production process generally begins with a film team approaching the branch of the Armed Forces it wishes to obtain support from through its respective liaison office. After a script has been submitted, an initial assessment occurs and if accepted, a recommendation for support is prepared for the Pentagon, with suggested script changes included, if deemed necessary by the individual service. The final decision for approval however lies with the Department of Defense and ultimately with the office of the Special Assistant for Entertainment Media. Once a script has been approved, a project officer is assigned to assist film production. The rough cut of any film must be reviewed before public release and early enough to make changes should the Pentagon demand them. Finally, the support of the Department of Defense must be acknowledged in the film’s end credits, cf. Robb.

⁵⁵ Cf., Robb.

⁵⁶ AP, “Pentagon provides for Hollywood,” *U.S.A Today*, May 29, 2001, accessed July 5, 2013, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/2001-05-17-pentagon-helps-hollywood.htm>.

the world.⁵⁷ However, the role of the Pentagon goes beyond a mere supplier of technology and free rider on Hollywood's PR machinery. It actively takes control of the popular image of national security that is being created in the films it cooperates with.

In many past instances, the Pentagon has requested script changes to make a movie more 'accurate', which ultimately was a demand to show the military in a more favorable light.⁵⁸ The conditions of 'realism' and 'accuracy' go far beyond the proper handling of weapons, or the following of military protocol in details such as proper saluting or accurate uniforms. A telling example for this is *Thirteen Days* (2000), a film by Kevin Costner about the Cuban Missile Crisis. As the author David Robb has reported, the Pentagon considered the portrayal of top ranking military figures, such as U.S. Air Force General Curtis Le May, to be too bellicose and warmongering, and denied support for the film. Despite the fact that the military position of LeMay and others could be proven to be historically accurate, due to secret tapes recorded by President Kennedy in the White House, the Pentagon refused to accept this historic 'reality.' Ultimately, 'accuracy' and 'realism' represent flexible categories of interpretation in which the Pentagon can apply its own definition of what constitutes a realistic portrayal of national security, and which version of reality it deems fit to support with expertise, manpower and equipment.

This ultimately links the production of films and the cinematic practice of national security to the representation of identity as constructed by the Department of Defense and the hegemonic discourse of military power, geopolitics, and national security.

⁵⁷ Cf., Suid.

⁵⁸ Cf., Robb.

As the official statements of the various film liaison offices of the American military document, the goal of the Pentagon and the Armed Forces in the production of films is the projection of ‘authentic’ images.⁵⁹ These are not simply for entertainment purposes; ‘authentic’ images are also meant to ‘educate’ audiences. As a U.S. Marine officer involved in the film business has argued, the majority of Americans today obtain their information about the U.S. military through entertainment products such as movies.⁶⁰

By watching *Ironman 2* or *Battleship*, the audience is not only being entertained, it also is supposed to learn what the American military is and what it does. The 1986 film *Top Gun* for example, which celebrated the daredevil exploits of U.S. Navy pilot Pete ‘Maverick’ Mitchel, played by Tom Cruise, saw the substantial involvement of the U.S. Navy. The film is credited for a subsequent, marked increase in recruitment figures for the Navy and Air Force.⁶¹ In fact, it has been the representation of the fictional entity of the S.H.I.E.L.D intelligence agency in the *Avengers* movie, as a formally ‘international’ body, outside the national chain of

⁵⁹ According to the website of the U.S. Army’s Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Western Region (OCA- West): “OCA- West’s goal is to educate American and global audiences about the U.S. Army by ensuring realistic/plausible portrayal of Soldiers in the entertainment media;” “Mission,” OPCA West, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.army.mil/info/institution/publicAffairs/ocpa-west/faq.html>. The Air Force Office of Public Affairs, Entertainment Liaison defines its mission as: “To project and protect the image of the United States Air Force within the global entertainment environment;” “Wings over Hollywood,” Air Force Office Entertainment Liaison Office, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.airforcehollywood.af.mil/>. The U.S. Navy Information Office West states: “We’re happy to provide guidance during all phases of production as well as in all phases of the creative process in order to develop an authentic, accurate and supportable project;” “Our mission statement,” Navy Office of Information – West, accessed July 17, 2013, <https://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navinfo/navinfoWest.html>. The U.S.MC Motion Picture & TV Liaison Office lists as criteria for official support: “The production must benefit the Department of Defense, or otherwise be in the national interest (...);” “FAQ,” U.S.MC Motion Picture & TV Liaison Office, accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/divpa/Units/LosAngelesPublicAffairs/FAQ.aspx>.

⁶⁰ *Hollywood and the Pentagon: A Dangerous Liaison*, documentary (2003; Canada: Baseline, 2012), available on YouTube, accessed July 17, 2013; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r20a7nHpnY>.

⁶¹ David Sirota, “25 years later, how ‘Top Gun’ made America love war,” *Washington Post*, August 26, 2011, accessed July 17, 2013, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-08-26/opinions/35271385_1_pentagon-brass-military-budget-top-gun.

command that impeded the cooperation of the Pentagon with the production of this film. As Mr. Strub explained:

We couldn't reconcile the unreality of this international organization and our place in it. [...] To whom did S.H.I.E.L.D. answer? Did we work for S.H.I.E.L.D.? We hit that roadblock and decided we couldn't do anything with the film.⁶²

This was despite the fact that the *Avengers* featured a cast of predominantly American superheroes, defending the United States against alien invasion, and had Captain America as the team's leader, who in the fictional Marvel universe is a product of the U.S. Army's 'super soldier' program. The Pentagon however, defines the geopolitical identity of 'American' as one that is line with the national chain of military command and control within the national security state.

While the production team of *G.I. Joe: Rise of Cobra* (2009) received permission to film at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin in California, according to Vincent C. Ogilvie, Deputy Director for Entertainment Media at the Pentagon, the Department of Defense could only provide limited support in part due to the fact that *G.I. Joe* was not 'wholly American.'⁶³ Even though, the film's plot was changed after negative reaction from fans and U.S. service members, to make the military unit of Special Forces operatives predominantly American instead of an international team based in Belgium, it was still deemed too international. Furthermore, the lack of clarity about where the unit fit within the context of U.S. national security and the command authority of the President and the Department of Defense meant that it could not be considered a 'realistic' portrayal of U.S. military power.

⁶² Spencer Ackerman, "Pentagon Quit The Avengers Because of Its 'Unreality'," *Wired*, May 07, 2012, accessed July 12, 2013, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/05/avengers-military/>. In the Marvel cinematic universe S.H.I.E.L.D. is an acronym for Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division.

⁶³ Jeff Schogol, "Transformers beat G.I. Joe in battle for DOD support for summer blockbusters," *Stars and Stripes*, May 27, 2009, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/news/transformers-beat-g-i-joe-in-battle-for-U.S.-Department-of-Defense-support-for-summer-blockbusters-1.92061>.

In the *Transformers* franchise on the other hand, where it is clear that it is the American military that is defending national security ‘under U.S. command and control’ the support of the Pentagon even extended beyond what was originally asked for.⁶⁴ Reportedly, Mr. Strub urged the filmmakers of *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009) to also include the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps in the movie, in part so the Pentagon would have the opportunity to display even more of its weaponry and soldiers.⁶⁵ In popular geopolitical discourse, the reality of giant alien robots can be accepted if it conforms to the hegemonic vision of U.S. global leadership and military power. An ‘international’ context however that sees the United States merely involved in a joint effort, and does not clearly represent the sovereign geopolitical identity of the United States as a nation-state and hegemonic superpower is too ‘unrealistic’ a projection of American national security.

While ‘realism’ and ‘accuracy’ are officially stated as the decisive criteria that determine if a film can obtain support from the Pentagon, the realism of national security that the Pentagon seeks to promote and project on the big screen seems oftentimes far removed from the scenarios the American military is actually involved in, in real life. The Academy Award winning *Hurt Locker* (2009) for example, although hailed by then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates as ‘authentic’ and ‘very compelling’ did not enjoy official assistance.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.; cf., Steve Rose, “The U.S. military storm Hollywood,” *Guardian*, July 6, 2009, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/jul/06/us-military-hollywood>.

⁶⁶ Julian E. Barnes Ned Parker and John Horn, “The Hurt Locker sets off conflict,” *LA Times*, February 25, 2010, accessed July 13, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/25/entertainment/la-et-hurt-locker26-2010feb26>.

The actions of a traumatized, renegade bomb disposal specialist in Iraq, who becomes addicted to the violence and adrenalin of war, was deemed ‘unrealistic.’ A movie franchise about shape-shifting alien robots based on a 1980s kids cartoon was sufficiently ‘authentic’ to be awarded a plethora of military assistance. Unlike the *Hurt Locker*, *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* clearly promotes a global leadership role of the United States in defense of freedom and democracy, demonstrating the importance of military superiority and readiness against existential threats. It also constructs an unambiguous identity of American exceptionalism and soldierly heroism against the ultimate threatening Other, which seeks to dominate and destroy the United States and its allies.

This Pentagon realism of national security and geopolitics is predominantly constructed in a virtual reality where the moral ambiguity, uncertainty of purpose and questionable outcomes that have accompanied the real life military interventions of the United States in the aftermath of 9/11 does not enter the popular imagination. Instead, we see the Pentagon support films in which Hollywood constructs an opponent whose evil otherness is the perfect enemy to fight and win against: the alien invader.

The alien invasion theme reproduces a basic Manichean narrative of American innocence the Pentagon can support. Just as 9/11 was constructed as an attack out of the blue by ‘evildoers’ and ‘enemies of freedom,’ the alien invasion on screen comes over America as swift, sudden assault, taking an unprepared nation by surprise.⁶⁷ There is no backstory leading up to events, no ‘blowback’ of previous American

⁶⁷ See Croft, *Culture Crisis and America's War on Terror*.

covert or military actions and no insight into the rationale for invasion. Just like Nazis, Soviet Communists or Jihadists, the alien invader simply represents an enemy of freedom that America has to defeat in a basic struggle of good vs. evil, confirming the essential role of the United States as the 'world's preeminent power.'⁶⁸

According to the IMDB database between January 2009 and July 2014 a range of movies that feature the American military have obtained official support for their production through the Pentagon, including *The Messenger* (2009), *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (2011), *Battle: Los Angeles* (2011), *Act of Valor* (2012), *Battleship* (2012), *Man of Steel* (2013), *G.I. Joe: Retaliation* (2013), *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013), and *White House Down* (2013). Remarkably, the majority of these films do not depict the American military in real-world conflict but show American soldiers, sailors and Marines engaged in fighting giant robots and evil aliens in a series of films that largely subscribe to the science-fiction genre.

No doubt, the predominantly male teenage audience of these special effects movies, with their fast cuts, action-centered plots, and multiple explosions and firefights, is one group the recruiters for the Armed Forces hope to inspire with a positive image of serving in America's high-tech military. An illusion of realism, film promises the opportunity to experience the excitement of battle, the thrill of violence and destruction, and the spirit of camaraderie that the military embodies.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011).

⁶⁹ As such war or military-themed films and video games also represent themes of sexual euphoria and fantasies of hyper-masculinity, again highlighting the gender perspective in the popular imagination of national security, see also Suid, pp. 6-11.

At the same time, these Pentagon-supported films reflect the dominant representation of military power, national security and its geopolitical contextualization in popular culture, located as they are at the juncture of Hollywood and Washington. In the majority of films the viewer encounters a technologically sophisticated, powerful and ultimately victorious United States that guarantees freedom and security across the globe, and at home.

Through its involvement in the production of popular movies, the Pentagon can link a particular representation of military power and geopolitical identity that is usually limited to press statements, strategy papers and defense reviews to the practice of filmmaking. The medium of film can thus help to create a popular imagination of national security that is supportive of the policies and actions that the Department of Defense pursues, the self-image it wishes to project, and the grand strategy discourse it promotes. According to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel:

The United States of America possesses the most lethal, strongest, most powerful military today in the history of the world. We will continue to have that kind of a military. We need that kind of a military to protect our interests.⁷⁰

Hollywood provides the cinematic narrative and visual spectacle in support of this rationale. Furthermore, the United States is always seen as acting in defense, its supreme military power only mobilized in response to external threat: the superpower as defender, liberator and protector. In addition, and unlike historic war films or even contemporary reflections of Iraq and Afghanistan, the entirely fictional scenario of an alien invasion allows the Pentagon to be involved in an even more sanitized version of warfare and military heroism, where post-traumatic stress,

⁷⁰ Quoted in, Senate Committee on Armed Services, Department of Defense Authorization of Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015 and the Future Years Defense Program, March 5, 2014, p. 61.

civilian casualties, mutilation or friendly fire incidents are largely absent from the scenario of war fighting. Also, unlike the contested political reasons for going to war in Iraq or the doubtful final outcome of the Afghanistan mission, the moral cause for fighting in these films is unquestionable, and the outcome always a total victory.

In the *Transformers* franchise for example the United States faces the threat of shape-shifting alien robots, the Decepticons, who want to exploit earth for its energy resources and technology to rule the universe. America is aided by a group of ‘good’ robot aliens, the Autobots. The second installment of the series, the 2009 *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* is particularly interesting for the unprecedented support the U.S. Department of Defense has provided director Michel Bay in terms of military equipment and personnel.⁷¹ In *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* the American military deploys the entire range of its devastating firepower, representing all branches of the Armed Forces to win a decisive victory in the deserts of the Middle East. This film display of American military superiority and network-centric warfare in defense of world order includes the use of satellites in outer space, Predator drones, and high-tech command centers. According to the Pentagon:

(...) full-spectrum dominance means the ability of U.S. forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen is full-spectrum dominance in action.⁷² At the same time Michael Bay’s *Transformers* films or *Battle: Los Angeles* with their

⁷¹ In the final confrontation between the humans and Autobots and the Decepticons in Egypt, shot on location on the U.S. Army’s missile range in New Mexico, a B-1 bomber, AWACs surveillance plane, six F-16 Fighting Falcon strike fighters, the U.S. Army’s Golden Knights parachute team, armored Humvees, M1 Abrams tanks, M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, MLRS missile-launchers, the aircraft carrier U.S.S John C. Stennis and a group of real-life United States Marines join the fight on the American side, cf., David Axe, “Pentagon, Hollywood Pair up for Transformers Sequel.” *Wired*, December 29, 2008, accessed August 21, 2012, <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/12/pentagon-holl-1/>.

⁷² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing

highly visceral, audio-visual effect bombardments and unapologetic relish in destruction seem like the military-entertainment-industry's equivalent of 'shock and awe,' or what film critic A O Scott calls 'symphonies of excess and redundancy, taking place in a universe full of fire and metal and purged of nuance'.⁷³ There is no possibility for diplomacy, compromise or restraint, but only a Manichean confrontation of the forces of good versus the forces of evil.

Fig. 9 *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009)



'Full spectrum dominance' in action. The U.S. military vs. the Decepticons in *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*.⁷⁴

In contrast to the high-tech desert warfare of *Revenge of the Fallen* the fighting in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* and *Battle: Los Angeles* seems much more influenced by an asymmetrical conflict setting, showing the United States military

Office, 2000), p. 61.

⁷³ A. O. Scott, "One Small Step for Man, One Giant Leap for Autobots," *New York Times*, June 28, 2011, accessed November 12, 2012, http://movies.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/movies/transformers-dark-of-the-moon-theyre-at-it-again-movie-review.html?ref=movies&_r=0.

⁷⁴ Retrieved December 22, 2014, from <http://www.marturia.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/transformers2.jpg>.

engaged in urban combat, employing essentially guerrilla tactics against superior enemy forces. Displaying America's Armed Forces as the underdog seems odd, given the status of the United States as the world's preeminent military power. However, these representations seem to reflect the costly and frustrating realities of asymmetrical warfare the U.S. military had to adapt to in the post-9/11 world. Here, counter-insurgency (COIN) and counter-terrorism (CT) became the Pentagon's new focus of war fighting, instead of conventional military confrontations with a potential peer competitor.⁷⁵ In a remarkable reversion of roles though, the American soldiers act as insurgents, and the alien invader is the occupying force.

This classic narrative of David vs. Goliath allows the audience to easily identify with the American 'citizen-soldier,' who defends the homeland with ingenuity and courage against the crushing superiority of the enemy's war machine. At the same time, this cinematic imagination that the Pentagon promotes through the films it supports, conveniently avoids a critical engagement with the reality of American military power as occupying force in the post-9/11 environment. In the 2011 *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* for example, the Decepticons launch an invasion of Chicago in their quest to subjugate Earth. In a costly final battle the Autobots and a small infantry unit of American soldiers manage to defeat the Decepticons once more.

According to its website, the U.S. Air Force provided 50 Airmen from Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command and the 1st Special Operations Wing for the

⁷⁵ See U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010); David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009).

film as extras, together with an CV-22B Osprey plane and shoots on location at Hulbert Field, Florida and Edwards Air Force Base, California. According to Lt. Col. Francisco Hamm, the U.S. Air Force Entertainment Liaison Office Director of Public Affairs. "The franchise has been a great vehicle to showcase our aircraft, our Airmen and our mission capabilities, all within a canvass of joint operations."⁷⁶

Where the U.S. Air Force took the lead in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, the U.S. Marine Corps followed with its own invasion movie. *Battle: Los Angeles* is set in modern day Los Angeles, where a retiring Marine Staff Sergeant (Aaron Eckhardt) must go back into the line of duty to lead American troops during yet another global alien invasion. Here it is again the other, rather than the United States, who has the advantage of techno-power and operates sophisticated drones that control the skies and rain down death and destruction from above. The films centers on the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines and the production received substantial cooperation from the U.S. Marines Corps, including guidance, equipment, military training of actors and access to Camp Pendleton in California.⁷⁷

The purpose of the alien invasion is ultimately to serve as a backdrop for the display of the heroism and military power of the United States and the Marine Corps in particular. The website brandchannel.com quotes the film's leading star Aaron Eckhardt who explained at the film's premier: "This is a movie about Marines... kicking ass. When people see this movie, we want to make sure that they love the

⁷⁶ "Transformers: Dark of the Moon filmed at Hurlburt; Airmen included as extras", U.S. Air Force, accessed June 30, 2013, <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123262258>.

⁷⁷ Mike Scott, "Aaron Eckhart went through military training to make 'Battle: Los Angeles' seem real," *Times-Picayune*, March 14, 2011, accessed July 16, 2013, http://www.nola.com/movies/index.ssf/2011/03/aaron_eckhart_went_through_mil.html.

Marines."⁷⁸ Finally, in *Battleship* the defense of national security against invading aliens moves to the Pacific, and this time it is the United States Navy that is allowed to take the spotlight. Again the world is threatened by an alien invasion and again American military power is the planet's last and best hope for survival.⁷⁹ The film's naval focus on a military exchange in the Pacific Ocean contrasts with the more ground combat and air power oriented films of the *Transformers* series and *Battle: Los Angeles*.

Fig. 10 *Battleship* (2012)



Protecting the 'global commons' on screen. The *USS Missouri* is facing off against the Alien invader in *Battleship*.⁸⁰

Departing from Iraq and Afghanistan inspired scenarios *Battleship* is particularly interesting in the context of the growing debate in the United States about checking a

⁷⁸ Abe Sauer, "Retreat, Sell! "Battle: LA" and Product Placing the Marines," *brandchannel*, March 14, 2011, accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.brandchannel.com/home/post/2011/03/14/retreat-sell!-battle-la-and-marine-corps-product-placement.aspx>.

⁷⁹ In essence, the U.S. Navy features as the protagonist of this film, in particular the Pacific Fleet's real-life Arleigh-Burk class Destroyers U.S.S John Paul Jones and U.S.S Sampson and their crews. After the loss of both ships the remaining survivors have to reactivate the film's name-giving battleship, the WW 2-era U.S.S Missouri, in order to defeat the invading aliens and their main communications outpost on Oahu, Hawaii.

⁸⁰ Retrieved December 22, 2014, from <http://cdn.screenrant.com/wp-content/uploads/battleship-movie-review.jpg>.

rising China in the Pacific, and the Pentagon's plans for an Air-Sea battle concept.⁸¹

Battleship seems to bring the 'Asian pivot' to the big screen. The online defense and acquisition journal *DoD Buzz* quotes the Navy Chief of Information, Rear Admiral Denny Moynihan has explained:

We can't take everyone out to our ships, but we can work with Hollywood and bring the Navy to life on the big screen. Consequently, it's in our best interest to engage and make sure that movies like *Battleship* accurately portray who we are and what we do as a Navy.⁸²

Although a science-fiction film, *Battleship* both asserts the geopolitical identity of the United States as a 'Pacific power,' and it underlines the key role of military power for maintaining national security and the defense of freedom.

In contrast to the Pentagon supported science-fiction films the 'realistic' films, depicting the American military are limited to *The Messenger*, *White House Down* and *Olympus Has Fallen*, the latter two both depicting a terrorist takeover of the White House, and finally the Pentagon produced *Act of Valor*. A novel development, *Act of Valor* is a film about the elite Special Forces unit of the U.S. Navy, the SEALs (Sea Air Land teams) that was directly commissioned by the Navy's Special Warfare

⁸¹ Cf., "The China Syndrome," *The Economist*, June 9, 2012, accessed August 16, 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/21556587>; Abhijit Singh, "Rebalancing the Maritime Pivot to Asia," *Diplomat*, September 17, 2013, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/rebalancing-the-maritime-pivot-to-asia/>. For an overview of Air-Sea Battle, see Greg Jaffe, "U.S. model for a future war fans tensions with China and inside Pentagon," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2012, accessed November 20, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-model-for-a-future-war-fans-tensions-with-china-and-inside-pentagon/2012/08/01/gJQAC6F8PX_story.html. Seemingly echoing the 'pivot' *Battleship*'s main locations are situated in Asia and the Pacific; furthermore, the U.S. Navy is aided in its fight against the invading aliens by the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) and their Destroyer *Myōkō*. The spirit of the American-Japanese security alliance and the United State's security cooperation in Asia are also invoked when the first scenes of the movie featuring naval forces, show the beginning of RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise). According to the U.S. Navy, it is the 'world's largest international maritime warfare exercise', where the United States regularly invites allied naval forces for joint maneuvers.

⁸² Philip Ewing, "The military-industrial-entertainment complex," *DoD Buzz*, May 23, 2012, accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.dodbuzz.com/2012/05/23/the-military-industrial-congressional-entertainment-complex/>.

Command and features real-life SEALs as the protagonists.⁸³ The near all-action oriented film follows a group of SEALs as they track a global terrorist network, which seeks to set off a media frenzy and economic collapse within the United States by detonating a nuclear bomb. *Act of Valor* is popular reflection of the prominence of Special Forces and covert operations in combating terrorism under the Obama administration, as highlighted by the assassination of Osama bin Laden by the Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU), also known as SEAL Team 6.⁸⁴

⁸³ Rebecca Keegan, "'Act of Valor' must balance publicity, secrecy with Navy SEAL," *LA Times*, February 12, 2012, accessed August 21, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/feb/12/entertainment/la-ca-act-of-valor-20120212>.

⁸⁴ See also Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will," *New York Times*, May 29, 2012, accessed August 10, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?pagewanted=all>.

Fig. 11 *Act of Valor* (2012)



The Hollywood-Pentagon liaison on a new level. UK Film poster for *Act of Valor*.⁸⁵

Only in one instance did the Pentagon lend support to a film that somewhat punctuated the narrative of American superior military power as victorious defender of freedom and security. *The Messenger* features Will Montgomery, a rebellious U.S. Army Staff Sergeant and declared war hero, who has returned home from Iraq. He is assigned to the Army's Casualty Notification service and partnered with the recovering alcoholic, Captain Tony Stone to give notice to the families of fallen soldiers. *The Messenger* is quite a counter-point to the high-tech firework displays of military power in *Transformers* and *Battleship*. The film shows the wars of America coming back to the home front and the human cost attached to the role of global

⁸⁵ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://theaviationist.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/act-of-valor-poster04.jpg>.

superpower. Given the backdrop of the Iraq war, the *Messenger* can be seen as questioning both the defensive and victorious representations of military power and the meaning of military superiority altogether.

Fig. 12 *The Messenger* (2009)



Captain Tony Stone (Woody Harrelson) and Sergeant Will Montgomery (Ben Foster) on their way to notify the family of a fallen soldier.⁸⁶

However, in comparison with the other films supported by the Pentagon and given their respective production cost and box office successes, it seems that the image of the American military that film producers, the Department of Defense and the American public embrace most, is one of muscular military prowess in the defense of national security and global order, with the United States emerging victorious from a clear confrontation of good vs. evil.

⁸⁶ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://jto.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/ff20130308a3a.jpg>.

This is even more striking when the Pentagon supported alien invasion films are compared against a more critical, cinematic reflection of military power. According to boxofficemojo.com, in 2011 *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* grossed \$352.4 million domestically and *Battle Los Angeles* made \$83.5 million, while the Iraq War movie *Green Zone* (2010) grossed \$35 million, the Oscar-winner *Hurt Locker* \$17 million and *In the Valley of Elah* (2007), which featured abuse of prisoners and post-traumatic stress in soldiers, \$6.7 million. Even the critically panned *Battleship* still managed to gross \$65 million in 2012. Between a critical reflection of America's military involvement in the Middle East, and a military fiction of defending the American homeland against evil aliens, the winner at the box office is clear.

It is maybe the on-going commitment to a particular image of American military power that is the most significant contribution of mainstream Hollywood film in the popular discourse of national security and geopolitics. The military as the 'embodiment of the nation,' its warriors united by 'shared values and a common destiny', which display the highest forms of valor and idealism in the confrontation against America's enemies.⁸⁷ Given the continued representation of the United States' heroic identity and military superiority in Hollywood films under President Obama, it seems that the narrative of American hegemony maintains a dominant position in defining the geopolitical vision of the United States in the popular imagination. In the movies, at least the ones that sell best at the box office, America does not go home and it leads from the front, not from behind.

⁸⁷ Ó Tuathail directly relates this celebration of American military power to the Jacksonian tradition in American foreign policy, cf., Ó Tuathail, "The Frustrations of Geopolitics and the Pleasures of War: *Behind Enemy Lines* and American Geopolitical Culture," p. 362.

The dominant cinematic narrative in the films surveyed so far establishes the United States as heroic, powerful and victorious defender of security and order. However there are prevailing counter-narratives to this theme in popular films, and not only in independent films, or economically negligible small budget productions such as *The Messenger*. In *Avatar* for example, one of the most successful films of all times, the Resources Development Administration (RDA) that invades the planet of Pandora to mine for natural resources and violently displaces the indigenous population can be read as an allegory for the United States as imperialist and militarist aggressor in the name of corporate profit.⁸⁸ The film has been viewed as critique of American foreign policy, in particular directed against the vision of American primacy followed by the George W. Bush administration in its invasion of Iraq, and was even accused of being anti-American.⁸⁹

Another form of counter-narrative is the location of threat to the United States not externally but internally. In *Iron Man 2* for example the threat to national security arises not only from a mad Russian scientist, but also domestically from corporate greed and the willingness of a corrupt CEO to use criminal practices in his pursuit of profit and status. A common element in representing internal threats to national security is through the negative depiction of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), arguably the best known of the several agencies the United States maintains for secret intelligence purposes. The theme of rogue agents for example, which are being

⁸⁸ See Dave Itzkoff, "You saw what in 'Avatar'? Pass those Glasses!," *New York Times* January 20, 2010, accessed November 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/20/movies/20avatar.html>.

⁸⁹ "James Cameron: 'Avatar' Is Political But It's Not Un-American."

hunted down by the CIA, because of their knowledge of illegal government activities, has been featured in films such as *Red* (2010), and *The Bourne Legacy* (2012).⁹⁰ In Hollywood, the CIA often represents a darker side of the American superpower. It is perhaps the aspect of American national security most frequently portrayed in a negative or at least critical fashion.⁹¹

Plots that feature threats emerging from the military-industrial complex, or an out-of-control intelligence establishment have provided the backdrop for a number of highly successful films, notably since the beginning of Obama's second term in office. Here, the United States is not represented as heroic defender of national security; quite to the contrary, institutional secrecy and uncontrolled executive power are themselves shown as threats to civil liberties and individual freedom.

In the commercially highly successful 2014 *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* for example Captain America doubts his role in the national security apparatus and is ultimately forced to fight his own side, the S.H.I.E.L.D. intelligence agency, which has been subverted from within, result of a widespread conspiracy, led by a State Department official. The surveillance and intelligence apparatus conceived to counter terrorists appears as direct danger to the American ideal of freedom Captain America embodies. As Steve Rogers explains, when confronted by S.H.I.E.L.D.'s

⁹⁰ The perceived threat to national security in these films does not lie in external attack but in the exposure of secrets the U.S. government wants to keep hidden, such as a war crime record of a presidential candidate (*Red*), or the illegal conduct of human experimentation by the Pentagon (*The Bourne Legacy*). In other instances individual CIA agents act as villains for a film, as criminals seeking illegal profits from selling sensitive information or material (*The A-Team*; *Knight and Day*), or as sleeper agents who work for a foreign power (*Salt*).

⁹¹ On favorable and unfavorable representations of the CIA on film, see also Oliver Boyd-Barrett et al., *Hollywood and the CIA: Cinema, Defense and Subversion* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 158-177.

plans to establish a global, weaponized surveillance network: “You hold a gun to everyone on Earth and call it protection. This is not freedom. This is fear.”⁹²

Fig. 13 *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014)



Captain America (Chris Evans) questions the methods of S.H.I.E.L.D. director Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson).⁹³

Captain America: The Winter Soldier provides a critical reflection of the Obama administration’s secret intelligence policy and global surveillance measures within the popular framework of a superhero movie. As the film review in the *Washington Post* stated:

(...), “The Winter Soldier” uncannily taps into anxieties having to do not only with post-9/11 arguments about security and freedom, but also Obama-era drone strikes and Snowden-era privacy.⁹⁴

⁹² Quoted in Scott Foundas: “Film Review: ‘Captain America: The Winter Soldier’,” *Variety*, March 20, 2014, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://variety.com/2014/film/reviews/film-review-captain-america-the-winter-soldier-1201139253/>.

⁹³ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://jeffreyklyles.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/captain-america-the-winter-soldier-captain-america-and-nick-fury.jpg>.

⁹⁴ Ann Hornaday, “‘Captain America: The Winter Soldier’ review: Maybe the most grown-up Avengers movie yet,” *Washington Post*, April 3, 2014, accessed August 11, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/gooutguide/movies/captain-america-the-winter-soldier-review-maybe-the-most-grown-up-avengers-movie-yet/2014/04/03/89bad3d8-ba60-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html; see also, Richard Collins, “REVIEW: In Captain America: The Winter Soldier, The Enemy Is Us,” *Time*, April 2, 2014, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://time.com/46760/captain-america-the-winter-soldier-movie-review/>; as Collins would describe the film’s premise: (...) the danger doesn’t emanate from a fantasy villain like Neutron or an imaginary realm like Asgard. It’s grounded in threats from today’s headlines, *ibid*.

The 2013 *White House Down* is a particularly interesting entry in this group of movies. On the surface the film is a standard action thriller that pits a Capitol Hill police officer against a group of terrorists that have taken over the White House and want to take the President of the United States hostage. In fact, *Olympus Has Fallen*, released in the same year, virtually features an identical scenario of ‘*Die Hard* in the White House,’ albeit with North Koreans as the terrorist enemy. What makes *White House Down* noteworthy in comparison is its critical contextualization. As the reviewer for *New Republic* has remarked:

(...) it manages to capture the zeitgeist: the movie is more concerned with civil liberties than foreign threats; the danger is the vaguely Tea Party-esque enemy within our own borders.⁹⁵

White House Down opens with President John Sawyer, played by Jamie Foxx, in the midst of negotiating a broad peace agreement with several countries in the Middle East, including Iran. As part of this agreement the United States has announced its willingness to withdraw all its troops from the region. In the film, the President specifically lays out a foreign policy vision of diplomacy and cooperation against a perpetual war scenario promoted by the ‘military-industrial complex,’ which is specifically referred to as such in the movie.

This focus on cooperative engagement, even with declared ‘enemies’ of the United States seems like a direct, filmic allegory of President Obama’s attempts at engagement with Iran. In fact, the similarities between President Sawyer and President Obama were noted by several critics.⁹⁶ The terrorist plot to take over the

⁹⁵ Isaac Chotiner, “The Surprisingly Left-Wing Politics of ‘White House Down’,” *New Republic*, June 28, 2013, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/113668/white-house-down-reviewed-isaac-chotiner>.

⁹⁶ Cf., Chotiner; Nicholas Barber, “White House Down: Obama gets his big-screen moment,” *Guardian*, September 13, 2013, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/sep/13/white-house-down-obama-foxx>; conservative critics in particular criticized Roland Emmerich for directing an anti-

White House is carried out by right-wing extremists and former Special Forces soldiers, and is ultimately orchestrated by the conservative Speaker of the House, and the military-industrial complex in an attempt to undermine President Sawyer's peace efforts. Within the framework of a standard Hollywood action film *White House Down* provides a narrative that pits a geopolitical vision of diplomacy, compromise and restraint against a status quo of American primacy, military supremacy and forward presence. The film appears like a cinematic endorsement of President Obama's verdict on the 'War on Terror' that: "(...) this war, like all wars, must end."⁹⁷

Republican, liberal action-fantasy, where Sawyer/Obama appears as the hero and the Speaker/John Boehner as the sinister villain, cf., David Franke, "'White House Down'—What a Waste," *American Conservative*, June 28, 2014, accessed August 12, 2014, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/white-house-down-what-a-waste/>.

⁹⁷ Quoted in: "The End of the Perpetual War," *New York Times*, May 23, 2013, accessed August 18, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/opinion/obama-vows-to-end-of-the-perpetual-war.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

Fig. 14 *White House Down* (2013)



Battling the military-industrial complex: Capitol Hill cop John Cale (Channing Tatum) and President James Sawyer (Jamie Foxx).⁹⁸

Another interesting case that seems to cast doubt on the narrative of superior American power appears in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). In the film Gotham City, a fictional version of New York is subject to a massive terrorist attack. In *The Dark Knight Rises* the United States does not appear as the triumphant force for good, but as a profoundly troubled country, whose national security is easily disrupted, with its military power largely ineffectual. The institutions the American society charges to maintain law and order, and keep the country safe cannot be trusted, are corrupt or rendered useless. Only Batman, a masked vigilante that operates outside the law, and who utilizes methods from illegal wiretapping to interrogation techniques bordering on torture manages to finally free Gotham City after months under foreign domination.

⁹⁸ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://madisonmovie.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/white-house-down.jpg>.

The theme of the lone American hero is of course a staple of Hollywood action films and the national security cinema, a theme originally made prominent by Westerns, where it is due to the courage and determination of the individual, and not the weak, or non-existing institutions of the state to bring outlaws to justice. And with his superior technological arsenal of weapons and vehicles, martial arts skills, and body armor, Batman arguably represents another version of the militarized superhero, acting in defense of the nation. *The Dark Knight Rises* then reformulates but does not replace the Manichean narrative of good vs. evil.

Conclusion

Analyzing the narratives and representations of national security in popular Hollywood film productions during the Obama presidency, this chapter has revealed a considerable amount of continuity and cohesiveness in the way geopolitical identity is constructed in popular discourse. The analysis suggests that the heroic identity of the United States, and the use of its outstanding military power in defense against a multitude of existential threats to the nation and the world are hallmarks of the way national security is narrated. A Manichean narrative of good vs. evil anchors representations of geopolitical identity in cinematic projections of national security. This popular image of the United States as defender of freedom fighting against ‘enemies of freedom’ and ‘evildoers’ is a powerful construct of identity that extends far beyond the realm of entertainment and is widely used, from President Obama to the Pentagon and prominent scholars like Robert Kagan.

Critically assessing discourses of U.S. national security through popular culture and cinematic narratives helps to reveal deep-seated constructs of identity and imagination, broadening and deepening a research perspective on grand strategy from a purely academic-political oriented discourse that limits its analysis to accounts of material power. At the same time, moving beyond a singular focus on representation and expanding a critical analysis of film to include processes of production and the practice of film making provides a better understanding how dominant discourses of national security and geopolitics are being created and maintained through the mutual exchange of the entertainment industry and the defense establishment.

Taking the combination of box office success, production value and geopolitical representation, the great majority of popular Hollywood film formulates a dominant geopolitical vision of American hegemony, the United States as heroic power that takes the lead in defending America and the world against the threat of evil aliens and global terrorists. This hegemonic identity of American leadership and global military supremacy however is not merely an entertaining movie fantasy but represents a basic belief and normative assumption in the purpose of American power and the role of the United States. Hollywood merely delivers a sensationalized and dramatized version of the discourse of geopolitical hegemony produced by the elite network of the foreign policy establishment, where Captain America, and not the *Messenger's* Captain Stone dominate the imagination of America's role in the world.

In fact, with films like *Battleship* and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* the U.S. Department of Defense is actively involved in promoting and projecting a popular imagination of military power and global leadership that corresponds with official statements of ‘full spectrum dominance’ and America as the ‘world’s preeminent power.’ This directly links the cinematic discourse of national security to the political formulation of grand strategy as geopolitical vision of hegemony, elevating the production of film beyond a creative process for entertainment purposes to a discourse of security and political act of considerable significance.

The Pentagon-Hollywood liaison is centered on the constant reproduction of a particular construct of geopolitical knowledge that weaves together themes of American exceptionalism, militarism and heroism. This hegemonic vision is then offered to audiences as ‘authentic’ and ‘real’ depiction of world politics and American power. In particular, the defense against alien invaders to save the nation and the world is a theme that regularly represents the heroic identity of the United States, and the use of its outstanding military power in a way that confirms a global leadership role for the United States as dominant geopolitical knowledge. *Battleship* reveals a dominant worldview that unites film producers and military officials in their vision of what the American military represents and the purpose it serves.

This geopolitical vision is meant to both entertain and educate, establishing global leadership, heroism and military supremacy as the hallmarks of American national security. As such, films like *Transformers*, *Battle: Los Angeles* and *Battle: Los Angeles* are military propaganda vehicles serving the interest of the Armed Forces for positive public relations and recruitment, but they also reveal a prevalent

conviction of truth that positions the United States and its military power as foundation and defender of a liberal world order of peace, democracy and prosperity that motivates IR scholarship and policy making.

Film provides a popular framework of reference for the understanding of the role and place of the United States in world politics, and the strong presence of the geopolitical vision of American hegemony in popular film questions the 'common sense' status of alternative discourses of grand strategy, given their lack of cinematic presence. In Hollywood, diplomacy, compromise and restraint do not appear as regular features of American geopolitical identity or national security practice. The national security cinema creates a world that appears as a profoundly dangerous place, where America stands largely alone in defending the freedom and safety of its people against a multitude of existential threats from international terrorists to super villains and alien invaders.

While *Iron Man 2*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, or *White House Down* display threats to national security that emerge domestically, from the military-industrial complex, or the national secret intelligence apparatus, these films do not question the fundamental Manichean narrative that represents the geopolitical identity of the United States as 'good.' Films like *Avatar* and *White House Down* however can be understood as critical reflections of American primacy within the framework of the action and science-fiction film that question the equation of military supremacy and national security. This demonstrates that, although usually a conservative voice in defense of the status quo, Hollywood is able to produce popular discourses that challenge conventional wisdom, provided the positive

geopolitical identity of the United States can be maintained, or redeemed as exceptional and heroic through the actions of the individual.

Here, aberrations in the pursuit of national security are corrected, when the American secret agent, soldier, or superhero overcomes the corruption, subversion or institutional ineptitude that has allowed the United States to be endangered from within.⁹⁹ As such, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* both affirms the geopolitical identity of the United States and its heroic, military exceptionalism, and it questions the excess of secrecy and surveillance that has come to be associated with American primacy under the Obama presidency.

This ambivalence about American power and hegemony the film expresses, reflects popular attitudes among Americans that are similarly split between a confirmation of American leadership and pride in the country's superpower status, and doubt over the use of force, and reticence to be engaged abroad. While the heroic past of Captain America remains a fixture of popular imagination, his current purpose and future role are unclear.

⁹⁹ This results in either averting the *real* threat to the United States, through foreign infiltration or global terrorism (*Salt*; *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*), or in exposing the illegal activities of others and bring the corruption of elements of the national security apparatus to an end (*Red*, *Knight and Day*, *A-Team*, *Bourne Legacy*, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*).

3. Competing visions for America – Popular grand strategy discourses on the *New York Times* best sellers list

Anybody around here know how to write a telegram?¹ – Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum

The previous chapter explored the intertextual link of popular culture and American grand strategy through an analysis of the cinematic imagination of geopolitics and national security. This analysis demonstrated how the basic Manichean narrative of ‘America saves the world,’ represents a dominant form of popular knowledge, a geopolitical vision of hegemony, continuously on display in thousands of American movie theaters. Now, the analysis will move beyond the more narrow focus on representations and production practices of the national security cinema to explore the wider scope of American grand strategy in popular geopolitical discourse.

To this end, the following chapter provides an analysis of best selling non-fiction works gathered from the *New York Times* best sellers list in the period January 2009 - July 2014 that have problematized the role and position of the United States in world politics under President Obama. The *New York Times* best sellers list is widely considered the preeminent account of best-selling books in the United States and as such obtains an outstanding location for the further mapping of popular discourse.²

¹ Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 15.

² It is published weekly in *The New York Times Book Review* magazine, with the Sunday edition of *The New York Times*, and as a stand-alone publication. For the analysis the online account of the weekly “*New York Times* Best Sellers” list was used, in the category of non-fiction hardcover, with rankings from No. 1 to No. 35, starting on 4 January 2009, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/2009-01-04/hardcover-nonfiction/list.html>, surveyed in monthly intervals until 6 July 2014, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/2014-07-06/hardcover-nonfiction/list.html>. Rankings reflect sales reported by vendors offering a wide range of general interest titles. The sales venues for print books include independent book retailers; national, regional and local chains; online and multimedia entertainment retailers; supermarkets, university, gift and discount department stores; and newsstands. Sales of both print books and e-books are reported confidentially to the *New York Times*. The best sellers lists are prepared by the News Surveys and Election Analysis Department of the *New York Times*. Information taken from: “About the Best Sellers,” *New York Times*, accessed September 19, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/paperback-advice/list.html>.

Focusing on popular non-fiction allows the thesis to investigate the discursive construction of grand strategy as a multidimensional phenomenon where entertainment, journalism, academia and political commentary intersect within popular culture. This moves somewhat beyond the distinction that critical geopolitics literature normally establishes between the boundaries of popular, formal and practical geopolitical discourses.³

As Joanne Sharp has rightly noted the division between ‘international relations and the politics of everyday praxis’ should be scrutinized.⁴ However, the ‘everyday’ production of geopolitical knowledge also transcends a clear separation between political practice, formal analysis, and popular representation. The *New York Times* non-fiction best sellers combine popularity, profit-orientation and mass appeal with the formal authority of expert knowledge and engage in practical policy recommendations in their articulation of grand strategy.

From a post-structural perspective there exists no distinctive hierarchy between discursive realms in the construction of reality and the legitimization of a generally accepted truth. As critical geopolitics has demonstrated, geopolitical knowledge is built from political, social and cultural resources.⁵ A process of imagination and articulation, grand strategy exists as a discourse that constructs geopolitical identity and links it to political practices of national security, which in turn reconfirms representations of identity. The designated purpose of grand strategy is to provide the ‘big picture’, to guide the national interest, to be accepted as commonly shared

³ See for example in Ó Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*; Ó Tuathail, *The Geopolitics Reader*.

⁴ Joanne Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 557.

⁵ Cf., Ó Tuathail and Dalby, eds, *Rethinking Geopolitics*.

reality of world politics based on a clear understanding of what the United States is, what purpose it has in international affairs and how it pursues its interests.⁶ As John Agnew writes, referring to ideas of world politics: “If believed, [...] and if in the hands of those powerful enough, they can become guides to action that make their own reality.”⁷ Hence, the stories, images and ideas that construct American grand strategy must be present in the popular imagination if they are meant to function as a national policy guideline or to remake the reality of geopolitics.

The popular texts collected on the *New York Times* list provide a wide range of (neo)-liberal and (neo)-conservative, Democrat and Republican, more internationalist or isolationist inclined views of the United States that have all reached the status of national bestsellers and thus a certain degree of popularity and discursive prominence. In line with Hollywood’s cinematic accounts of heroism and military prowess, American hegemony or global leadership appears as central theme on the *New York Times* list. However, among the grand strategy narratives collected in these popular artifacts, which in fact blur the line between entertainment and academic research, popular and formal discourse, alternative accounts of the present and future state of American power and international influence are more numerous and varied.

Accordingly, the authors of these books emerge from a wide range of backgrounds and professions, as former government officials, journalists, economists, pundits, geographers, radio talk show hosts, political scientists, and geopolitical analysts. Several of the authors included here enjoy a high media profile in the United States.

⁶ On the representation of the ‘national interest’ in the context of national identity and U.S. foreign policy, see Henry R. Nau, *At Home Abroad* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 15-42.

⁷ John Agnew, “Know-Where: Geographies of Knowledge of World Politics,” *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2007): p. 143.

Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Thomas L. Friedman is a regular op-ed contributor to the *New York Times*. Robert Kaplan is a best-selling author, and influential geopolitical analyst and journalist. Rachel Maddow is a popular political show host for MSNBC, while Robert Kagan is a well-known pundit, and leading neoconservative scholar. Bill O'Reilly acts as figurehead for the conservative *Fox News Channel*.⁸

The bestselling books analyzed here primarily feature works on geopolitics, American grand strategy, and U.S. foreign and security policy. However, it must be noted that even within the narrow confines of the *New York Times* list, on average books on geopolitical, economic, political, or related issues only represent a minority of the non-fiction works listed, the rest consisting of a wide array of celebrity memoirs, self-help guides, books on history, science, sports, comedy and the multitude of other topics that find interest among the readership of modern American society. While acknowledging this limitation however, the bestselling books that do problematize issues of geopolitics, or national security, provide valuable insight into the popular discourse about America's role in the world, and how it is expected to change or continue over the coming years and decades.

The individual books that have been selected for closer textual analysis have been chosen based upon their use of key representations of geopolitical identity (e.g. 'American exceptionalism'; 'global leadership'), including historical narratives (e.g. 'victory' in the Cold War), and their linking to practices of national security, defense

⁸ See in this context also in particular François Debrix's work, who refers to Bill O'Reilly and Robert Kaplan in particular as representatives of 'tabloid geopolitics,' a cultural mode of discourse which infuses the concepts of world order and national security with the sensationalized media representations of terror, shock and fear in order to substantiate ideological predispositions and agendas, cf., Debrix, pp. 37-39; pp. 146-149.

and military power projection (e.g. ‘command of the commons’) in defining the role and position of the United States in world politics. The similarities and differences in the way these distinctive representations are used in popular discourse, allow the thesis to identify basic grand strategy discourses, and thus map the terrain in which the popular debate on U.S. grand strategy takes place.⁹

Hegemony between American leadership and American empire

Several *New York Times* best sellers have formulated a grand strategy vision of American hegemony; a vision of global leadership of the United States based on the country’s military primacy, liberal, democratic identity, and economic preeminence.¹⁰ These popular works cover a wide intellectual range from International Relations to economics and geopolitics. *That Used To Be Us* for example contextualizes American hegemony domestically and economically. The book by journalist Thomas L. Friedman and political scientist Michael Mandelbaum presents a renewed grand strategy vision of global leadership and preeminence as an answer to the ongoing economic problems of the United States. Contrasting this liberal vision of grand strategy and hegemony, George Friedman’s *The Next 100 Years* and *The Next Decade* in turn approach American hegemony through the lens of classical geopolitics, neo-imperialism, and realpolitik, analyzing the geographic,

⁹ Cf. Hansen, p. 55-93.

¹⁰ Kagan, *The World America Made* [New York Times best seller, no. 29, March 04, 2012]; Friedman and Mandelbaum, 2011 [New York Times best seller, no. 2, October 2, 2011]; George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years* (New York, Doubleday, 2009), [New York Times best seller, no. 5, February 15, 2009]; George Friedman, *The Next Decade* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), [New York Times best seller, no. 3, February 13, 2011]; Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012), [New York Times best seller, no. 10, September 30, 2012]; Mitt Romney, *No Apology* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2010), [NYT Best seller, no. 1, March 21, 2010].

economic and military significance of Eurasia for maintaining the global primacy of the United States.

Robert Kaplan likewise explores the link of geopolitics and grand strategy in *The Revenge of Geography*. Here, historical lessons from the Roman Empire are drawn up to argue for the transformation of American hegemony from global power projection into a North-American empire of global economic reach. *No Apology*, by Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican presidential candidate, topped the *New York Times* best sellers list for the week of March 12, 2010. It explicitly linked a vision for American leadership in the world to the belief in American exceptionalism. Finally, *The World America Made* by the neoconservative political commentator Robert Kagan serves as an intertextual focal point that contains many of the basic representations and narratives that construct the grand strategy vision of American hegemony, both in popular, and in formal and practical discourse: the virtues of American exceptionalism, the dangerous volatility of any multipolar system, the avoidable character of American decline, and the desirability of America's military and economic preeminence.

The World America made opens with a reference to Frank Capra's classic *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946).¹¹ Just like George Bailey in the film, the reader is invited to imagine a world without America as the preeminent power. It is not, Kagan suggests, a world we should wish for. The book builds its argument for continued global American leadership around one central narrative: The liberal world order that has

¹¹ Kagan, *Word America Made*, p. 3.

emerged after World War 2 relies on American power and the worldview it supports.¹² In the words of Kagan:

The most important features of today's world—the great spread of democracy, the prosperity, the prolonged great-power peace—have depended directly and indirectly on power and influence exercised by the United States.¹³

According to this geopolitical narrative, were American power to decline, the liberal vision of an open, peaceful and democratic world, the United States supported, would lose ground to the visions of other powers with differing interests and beliefs.¹⁴ In *No Apology*, Mitt Romney follows this basic assessment of world politics. To him, the prospect of the United States becoming France, still great, but no longer leading, is simply 'chilling.'¹⁵

I reject the view that America must decline. I believe in American exceptionalism. I am convinced that we can act together to strengthen the nation, to preserve our global leadership, and to protect freedom where it exists and promote it where it does not.¹⁶

The World America Made constructs the United States as the 'benevolent empire', which makes any change toward another configuration of power in the international system likely to have negative consequences, in a world less free, less democratic, and more violent.¹⁷ A sentimental 1940s Hollywood film about a man exploring a reality in which he never existed becomes a geopolitical metaphor for the future: only a world with the United States as its leading power is a 'wonderful world order.'

The geopolitical imagination that underlies the popular discourse of American hegemony is developed from a clear spatial and temporal, Manichean separation of

¹² Ibid., p. 4.

¹³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴ Cf., ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ Romney, p. 10.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁷ Cf. Robert Kagan, "The Benevolent Empire" *Foreign Affairs* 111, (1998): pp. 24-35; *That Used To Be Us* makes essentially the same argument about America's benevolent hegemony, cf. Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 26.

positive and negative, a moral absolutism that does not allow room for variation, alternative, or change in international affairs. In its basic discursive framework, *The World America made* develops a key historical narrative of global political and economic progress since 1945, and directly links it to the geopolitical identity of the United States, represented as the ‘most powerful nation in the world’, ‘democracy’ and ‘the world’s leading free-market economy’.¹⁸ This makes the world we live in primarily an American achievement, rather than the result of universal historical processes.¹⁹

Parallel to a historic narrative of imperial order and decline, Kagan’s strategic vision of American hegemony invokes the theoretical perspective of realism in that power is the key factor in International Relations. The possession of power is said to allow a country to shape ideas and establish norms of behavior.²⁰ Through its intertextual connection to realism and imperialism, the discourse of American hegemony follows a central tradition of geopolitical thinking that characterizes the competition for power and the pursuit of primacy as ‘historical truth’ in its state-centered representation of world politics.²¹

However, beyond a Western and European centered narrative of world history, and the structuralism of International Relations theories, the discourse of American hegemony is built around a particular representation of national geopolitical identity. The global leadership of the United States is presented as the direct consequence of

¹⁸ Kagan, *World America Made*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹ “History shows that world orders, including our own, are transient. They rise and fall. Every international order in history has reflected the beliefs and interests of its strongest powers (...),” *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 8

²¹ Cf. Agnew, *Geopolitics*, pp. 67-84.

‘American exceptionalism.’²² It is the unique identity and power the United States possesses that explains the great success of the liberal order as Kagan sees it, not its inherent qualities and attractiveness:

America’s unique geographical circumstances, its capitalist economic system, its democratic form of government, and its enormous military power have together shaped a particular kind of international order that would have looked very different had another nation with different characteristics wielded a similar amount of influence.²³

As Kagan notes, despite a history of violent expansionism and multiple military interventions abroad, the self-perception of Americans casts the United States as the ‘Greta Garbo of nations,’ or the ‘reluctant sheriff,’ only engaging the world as a last resort to preserve the peace. The Other, against which the American sheriff must reluctantly draw his gun, appears as the ‘unsavory gangs’ that come riding into town: ‘Japanese imperialists,’ ‘Nazis,’ ‘Soviet Communists,’ ‘Islamic jihadis.’²⁴ This constructs the geopolitical identity of the United States as defender of peace and freedom by connecting it to a particular space and time of American myth, the Wild West. As explored in chapter two, this basic narrative in the hegemony discourse is frequently reproduced by Hollywood, where American soldiers and superheroes must defend Earth against evil aliens. Yet, as Kagan notes there seems to remain a disconnect between America’s self-perception, and the exercise of its power.

²² On American exceptionalism and its role in U.S. foreign policy, see especially Trevor B. McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam* (Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). “The term American exceptionalism describes the belief that the United States is an extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history; not only unique but also superior among nations;” McCrisken, p. 2. The idea of American exceptionalism draws from multiple historic genealogies, among these are: the colonial period and the cultural and religious heritage of Puritanism and Protestantism, the republican and democratic foundation of the United States and its inauguration in a deliberate political act through the Declaration of Independence, its relative geographic isolation, and the liberal tradition of entrepreneurship and capitalism, see also Seymour Martin Lipset, *American exceptionalism: a double-edged sword* (New York: Norton, 1996); Byron E. Shafer, *Is America Different?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²³ Kagan, *World America Made*, p. 9. To Kagan, this uniqueness extends to the ambivalent characteristics of American geopolitical identity, oscillating between individualism and universalism, activism and passivity, liberal creed and *realpolitik*, *ibid.*, pp. 14-15;

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

(...) one of the most powerful, influential, and expansive peoples in history still think of themselves as aloof, passive, self-contained, and generally inclined to minding their own business.²⁵

As Kagan notes: “Americans may be ‘imperialists’ in the eyes of many, but if so, they are reluctant, conscience-ridden, distracted, half-hearted imperialists.”²⁶ In this view, America remains the liberal ‘empire by invitation.’²⁷ A certain ambivalence in Americans’ perception of their role in the world seems indeed substantiated by recent opinion polls. These indicate that:

Over the past decade, disillusionment with U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have been coincident with the growing number of Americans who are reluctant to see the U.S. take an active role in solving international problems.²⁸

However, while Americans, when polled seem predominantly interested in sharing the responsibilities of global leadership with others, a large majority continues to believe that the United States is the ‘world’s leading military power’ and that it should remain so.²⁹

An unstable international system of multiple autocratic powers that fight over influence and territory represents the dangerous ‘Other’ to American leadership and unipolarity in the popular discourse of hegemony. This central dichotomy is the key

²⁵ Ibid., p. 9. Kagan describes a ‘irresolvable tension between individualism and universalism’, rooted in the country’s founding ideology, *ibid.*, p.12. Americans are described as “(...) suspicious about power, even their own, and this ambivalence is often paralyzing,” *ibid.* The geopolitical analyst George Friedman goes so far to describe the United States as ‘young and barbaric’, frequently emotionally overreacting, using its power fueled by idealism and without caution, then regretting involvement, cf., Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*, p. 48. Friedman concedes however that: “(...) for all their misgivings, most Americans have also developed a degree of satisfaction in their special role,” *ibid.* The ambivalence of America’s geopolitical identity is also constructed against the more overtly imperial identity of others, for example the British, represented by Kagan as holding a firm belief into their ‘vocation to rule’ during the British Empire, Kagan, *World America Made*, pp. 12-13. In juxtaposing imperial Britain against the geopolitically ambivalent United States, the latter appears, for all its flaws and failures, not like imperial powers of the past, but instead as a nation that regularly demonstrated an enlightened self-interest when it engaged the world, *ibid.*, p. 61; see in this context also, Ferguson, *Colossus*, which characterizes this lacking imperial vocation in the American people as problematic.

²⁶ Kagan, *World America Made*, p. 13.

²⁷ See Lundestad.

²⁸ “Americans: Disengaged, feeling less respected, but still see U.S. as world’s military superpower,” Pew Research Center, April 1, 2014, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/01/americans-disengaged-feeling-less-respected-but-still-see-u-s-as-worlds-military-superpower/>.

²⁹ Ibid.

discursive feature that constructs a grand strategy of American hegemony as the sole viable option for world politics in the 21st century. As Agnew and Corbridge have pointed out, geopolitics represents a historical tradition of territorial thinking and ‘power politics’ that is tied to the notion of hegemonic order as a necessary condition of world politics.³⁰

In his geopolitical forecasts George Friedman for example assesses future American grand strategy through the geospatial parameters that he sees as determining America’s power position and the course of international relations. Here, as in realist accounts, the global hegemony of the United States is primarily the result of its overwhelming military and economic power, most notably in its military control of the seas and maritime trade, and American grand strategy is motivated by the desire to maintain this position, and prevent any other power from achieving regional hegemony, focusing especially on Eurasia.³¹ American grand strategy appears as amalgam of Mackinder’s Heartland theory and Mahan’s emphasis on sea power.³² The geopolitical analysis underlying American hegemony generally betrays an imperialist and Manichean worldview where the United States ranks first among the world’s enlightened democratic powers and non-Western powers are generally

³⁰ Cf., John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (Oxon: Routledge, 1995). In *The World America Made*, the geopolitical ambition of great powers for regional dominance is only kept in check by the dominance of the United States. American decline would therefore mean a “return to something like the multipolar system of 19th century Europe, Kagan, *World America Made*, p. 85.

³¹ Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*, pp. 39-49. In realist terms this grand strategy is known as ‘selective engagement,’ cf., Art, *A Grand Strategy for America*.

³² According to Friedman, the goal of global hegemony is achieved in part through military interventions that block the aspirations of regional challengers to the position of the United States, such as Iraq, Serbia, or a potential ‘Islamic empire’ brought about by Al Qaeda, Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*, pp. 45-46.

viewed with suspicion. China and Russia in particular are singled out as potential threats, due to their authoritarian nature and territorial ambitions.³³

The arbitrary and pseudo-scientific nature of geopolitical analysis is well illustrated through Friedman's assessment of the 2003 Iraq War. First a grand strategy move with negligible cost in manpower, it is later recast as expression of a narrow 'politico-military strategy', that depleted resources and distracted from the true geostrategic interest and grand strategy of the United States: bringing order to its worldwide empire.³⁴ "The strategic goal must be to prevent the emergence of any power that can challenge the United States in any given corner of the world."³⁵ While Friedman openly advocates an American global imperial agenda, Robert Kaplan's *Revenge of Geography* likewise seeks to orient U.S. grand strategy according to an imperial example: ancient Rome. Rather than perpetuating its established global hegemony, the United States should prepare itself for a 'graceful retreat.'³⁶

³³ See for example the treatment of China and Russia in Kagan, *World America Made*; Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*; Friedman, *The Next Decade*; Kaplan, *Revenge of Geography*.

³⁴ Friedman, *The Next 100 Years*, pp. 3-7; p. 22. This imperial grand strategy requires, among other things, for the American president to openly acknowledge his role as 'global emperor' and to adopt Machiavellian politics in guiding the nation: These include an end to American commitments to constraining and outdated alliances and institutions, such as the UN, NATO and the IMF. Furthermore, Friedman suggests that the United States seek an alignment with Poland against a looming German-Russian entente, and to check a rising Japan, *ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27. Such a grand strategy of open, imperial primacy, or global dominance echoes the spirit of the Pentagon memorandum drafted by then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz during the George H. W. Bush administration that called for the United States to prevent the rise of any peer competitor, cf., Andrew Bacevich, "A Letter to Paul Wolfowitz," *Harper's*, March 2013, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://harpers.org/archive/2013/03/a-letter-to-paul-wolfowitz/?single=1>; see also G. John Ikenberry, "Liberalism and empire: logics of order in the American unipolar age," *Review of International Studies* 30 (2004): pp. 609-630.

³⁶ Wasting energies on securing an indefensible and ultimately destabilizing border is described by Kaplan as a failed grand strategy of the sort that has ushered in the downfall of the Roman Empire. Instead, the United States should follow the example of 'voluntary Romanization' from the zenith of ancient Rome's power, and create a common North-American sphere of influence with Mexico. Here, Kaplan takes a direct recourse to Mackinder's conceptualization of geopolitics: "The quality and fluidity of this cultural and binational interaction will, arguably, more than any other individual dynamic, determine how well America interacts with Mackinder's World Island (Eurasia and Africa)." Kaplan, *Revenge of Geography*, p. 344. According to Kaplan, a unified North-American empire, encompassing Canada, the United States, and Mexico, would serve as core of a 'Polynesian-cum-mestizo civilization: "America, in my vision, would become the globe's preeminent duty-free hot zone for business transactions, a favorite residence for the global elite. In the tradition of Rome, it will

The driving force behind many of the debates surrounding the future of American grand strategy and the nation's standing in the world is the worry about American decline. In the hegemony discourse, the prospect of decline is acknowledged, but the same time rebutted. In the *World America Made*, American decline is a choice, a matter of national will, not the consequence of shifting economic and geopolitical parameters, already notable in diminished international leverage.³⁷ The 'rise of the rest' is "(...) either irrelevant to America's strategic position or of benefit to it."³⁸

Only China appears as potential challenger, provided: "(...) the Chinese translate enough of their growing economic strength into military strength."³⁹ In the geopolitical imagination of hegemony, American decline would represent the transition from a positive unipolar to a negative multipolar world order. Having discounted external causes, such a transition is ultimately located in a possible transformation of American geopolitical identity at home that would no longer follow a vision of global leadership:

To many Americans, accepting decline may provide a welcome escape from the moral and material burdens that have weighed on them since World War II."⁴⁰

As Kagan would reiterate in 2014: "Superpowers don't get to retire." With its triumphalism and pathos, *The World America Made* describes American grand

continue to use its immigration laws [...] to further diversify attract an immigrant population that, as Huntington fears, is defined too much by Mexicans. In this vision, nationalism will be, perforce, diluted a bit, but not so much as to deprive America of its unique identity, or to undermine its military," *ibid.*, p. 339.

³⁷ Kagan, *World America Made*, p. 105. The economic and military parameters of American power on which American hegemony is build, remain unchanged in this view. "In economic terms [...] America's position in the world has not changed," *ibid.* To Kagan, the United States, parallel to the British Empire in 1870, is at the height of its economic and military power, cf., *ibid.*, p. 107. In *The World America Made*, as in many other grand strategy texts, the main indicators for economic power are the national gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States, and its share of global GDP, as well as per capita GDP, for military power the main indicator is the size of the defense budget of the United States, cf., *ibid.*, pp. 105-107.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

strategy as an issue that potentially decides the fate of the world. Here, the domestic challenges the United States faces to overcome its economic and social problems are seen as the greatest risk to its role as global hegemon: “As Thomas Friedman and others have asked, can Americans do what it needs to be done to compete effectively in the twenty-first century world?”⁴¹ This reference in *The World America Made* to Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum’s *That Used To Be Us*, illustrates how the popular discourse of American hegemony represents a remarkable mainstream consensus where neoconservative and neoliberal arguments for the American role in world politics significantly overlap.

That Used To Be Us diagnoses severe problems and shortcomings prevailing in the United States, mainly in the areas of high school education, immigration policies, public infrastructure, government debt, and innovation and competitiveness in the global economy, perpetuated by a gridlocked, partisan political system that hinders the collective action necessary to overcome these issues.⁴² But the worrisome state of America is not just seen as domestic challenge, but threat to America’s global hegemony. In their firm belief in the necessity of the United States’ global leadership role, the neoliberal and neoconservative view of American grand strategy converge:

A world shaped by a strong America—strong enough to provide political, economic, and moral leadership—will never be a perfect world, but it will be a better world than any alternative we can envision.⁴³

The issue of American grand strategy becomes directly entwined with the state of American politics and the American economy, and the need for deep and far reaching reform of both.

⁴¹ Kagan, *World America Made*, pp. 130-131.

⁴² Friedman and Mandelbaum, pp. 17-23.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

That Used To Be Us argues that the United States failed to adopt a compelling grand strategy after its victory in the Cold War, one as coherent and focused as containment, which is supposed to have successfully channeled the nation's political, economic and military energy toward the confrontation against the Soviet Union as America's geopolitical rival.⁴⁴ Invoking George F. Kennan's famous 'long telegram' from Moscow, Friedman and Mandelbaum, worriedly ask if anybody still knows how to write one.⁴⁵

Containment becomes the cipher for an idealized past of American hegemony and visionary strategic thinking.⁴⁶ This narrative rests on the assumption that it was the United States, which 'won' the Cold War, due to its commitment, ingenuity and power, while the Soviet Union 'lost,' overwhelmed by American economic and military might.⁴⁷ It was this competitive focus that supposedly kept the United States alert and innovative, and ultimately let it win the superpower race.⁴⁸ According to Mitt Romney: "George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan had pushed the Soviet Union to the wall and won."⁴⁹ However both liberal and neoconservative hegemonists believe that after the end of the Cold War, America allowed itself a 'holiday from history', as Charles Krauthammer put it.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.13-17; the key historic narrative this argument is based on can be found for example in Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*.

⁴⁵ Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 15.

⁴⁶ The argument that the success of past U.S. grand strategy as embodied in 'containment' should serve as an example for the formulation of a new grand strategy of economic reform and multilateral engagement is regularly explored, see for example Doherty, "A New U.S. Grand Strategy."

⁴⁷ For a counter narrative to this version of the end of the Cold War, casting it as a negotiated and mutually beneficial outcome, see for example Jack F. Matlock Jr., *Superpower Illusions* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁴⁸ Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Romney, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 17.

That American decline is even a possibility then, is the result of ignorance and complacency, and a missing grand strategy for a global competitive environment. American hegemony has to be underwritten by a concentrated and conscious effort to strengthen the American economy, so the power generated domestically can be projected globally. The world may have become flat, but it is still zero-sum.

Engagement with the post-American world

Two works on the *New York Times* best sellers list stand out for prominently arguing for a grand strategy vision of cooperative engagement, based on a narrative of geopolitical transition: *The Post American World 2.0*. by Fareed Zakaria and *Strategic Vision*, by Zbigniew Brzezinski.⁵¹ In his best selling *The Post-American World*, published in 2008, Zakaria, a popular political analyst and commentator on CNN, and former editor of *Time* and *Newsweek*, argued that the dynamic, economic growth of non-Western powers, especially India and China was redistributing economic power and political influence more evenly across the globe. This would result in a relative decline of the United States. In consequence, the United States would still be a leading power, but no longer hegemonic, and should adopt a grand strategy where it maintained excellent relations with everyone, rather than offset and balance emerging powers.⁵²

⁵¹ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), [New York Times best seller, no. 27, July 03, 2011]; *Strategic Vision* [New York Times best seller, no. 10, February 12, 2012].

⁵² Zakaria, *The Post-American World*.

The updated and revised 2011 *The Post American World 2.0.*, sees the aforementioned geopolitical trends fasten and gain momentum as result of the global financial crisis:

I remain convinced that the United States can adapt and adjust to the new world I describe but the challenges have become greater and more complex (...). I also remain convinced that the geopolitical challenge of living in a world without a central, dominant power is one that will be felt everywhere and that too has been amply illustrated over the last few years.⁵³

Zbigniew Brzezinski, former security advisor to President Jimmy Carter, highly respected commentator on foreign affairs, and a prolific writer on American grand strategy and geopolitics shares Zakaria's analysis of a multipolar future.⁵⁴ In *Strategic Vision*, Brzezinski argues that in response to the shift of economic and political influence from West to East, the United States should pursue a grand strategy of global cooperative engagement: building a core partnership around a renewed and 'larger West' that encompasses the United States and the European Union, plus Russia and Turkey, and simultaneously engaging China as relationship of single importance in dealing with the 'new East'.

A central element that separates the grand strategy discourse of engagement, from the previous discussed of American hegemony, is the issue of power polarity in the international system. Where Kagan, Friedman and others deny that American unipolarity is ending, and represent American decline mainly as domestic challenge, Zakaria and Brzezinski see a changing balance of power as an unavoidable fact of international relations and geopolitics. Where the former equals American decline with the end of unipolarity and the volatility and chaos that will follow, the latter

⁵³ Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0*, p. xiii.

⁵⁴ Cf. Michiko Kakutani, "Surveying a Global Power Shift", *New York Times*, January 30, 2012, C1.

does not necessarily associate multipolarity with the demise of the United States and the liberal world order.

As Fareed Zakaria, who coined the term ‘post-American world’ insists, this story is not about American decline, but the ‘rise of everyone else.’⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the shift of economic dynamism and growth away from the United States and Europe toward the rising economies of the ‘rest,’ most importantly China and Asia, is expected to alter the international system and affect the future conduct of American foreign and security policy.⁵⁶

Brzezinski concludes that: “Accordingly, the United States must seek to shape a broader geopolitical foundation for constructive cooperation in the global arena (...).”⁵⁷ Where *The World America Made* exemplary constructs the grand strategy discourse of hegemony around a central historic narrative of unipolar stability and American indispensable leadership, *Strategic Vision* focuses on the transition and dispersion of global power in its argument for engagement.⁵⁸

Strategic Vision represents the United States as ‘focus of global attention.’⁵⁹ As in the discourse of hegemony, American decline is a potential danger to the ability of

⁵⁵ Zakaria, *Post-American World*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Of special significance here is the assessment of future economic growth by developing economies, in particular the so-called BRIC countries (Brazil, India, Russia, China), a term original coined by an analyst of Goldman Sachs, Jim O’Neill in a report from 2001 titled, “Building Better Global Economic BRICs,” cf. “Another BRIC in the wall,” *The Economist*, April 21, 2008, accessed March 05, 2013, http://www.economist.com/node/11075147?story_id=11075147; see also Zakaria, *Post-American World*; Parag Khanna, *The Second World: The Second World: How Emerging Powers Are Redefining Global Competition in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Random House, 2008).

⁵⁷ Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 1.

⁵⁸ As Brzezinski describes this geopolitical transition: “(...) the ultimate ‘defeat’ of the Soviet Union in the Cold War led to a brief unipolar phase in world affairs dominated by America as the sole global superpower. [...] by 2010, with America still preeminent, a new and more complex constellation of power containing a growing Asian component was visibly emerging,” *ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

the United States to project its values globally. However, in addition to ‘negative domestic realities’, ‘internationally resented foreign initiatives’ also can undermine America’s ability to ‘influence events constructively’ and thus ‘delegitimize America’s historical role.’⁶⁰ The challenge to American grand strategy then is not only to reform the country domestically in order to preserve its power, but also to ‘reorient its drifting foreign policy.’⁶¹ A multipolar world needs an America that is at once:

(...) economically vital, socially appealing, responsibly powerful, strategically deliberate, internationally respected, and historically enlightened in its global engagement with the new East.⁶²

Brzezinski formulates his strategic vision of global cooperative engagement not only against what he sees as futile vision of unipolar hegemony and imperial dominance, but also explicitly against the dangers of American isolationism and global retreat.⁶³ In the geopolitical imagination of engagement the United States can no longer fill the role of global hegemon and sole superpower, but it also does not retreat back onto itself, instead it serves as leading global partner for governance.

Where in the hegemony discourse, American exceptionalism seems to give the United States a clear mandate for global leadership and power projection, in Brzezinski’s vision of engagement, the allure of the American Dream works best if America successfully demonstrates its unique blend of ‘political idealism and

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 3.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 2. “(...) the ongoing changes in the distribution of global power and mounting global strife make it all the more imperative that America not retreat into an ignorant garrison-state mentality or wallow in self-righteous cultural hedonism,” *ibid.*

economic materialism' at home, making it an attractive partner to the world.⁶⁴ This is the geopolitical mantra of leadership through the 'power of our example', rather than the example of American power that is also represented in the text of the 2010 *National Security Strategy of the United States*.⁶⁵ As the thesis will demonstrate in the following chapters, this conviction that America must lead, but must not lead alone, is a central trope of the liberal strand of the American grand strategy discourse of hegemony that fuses a dominant representation of American leadership with arguments for cooperative engagement, resulting in a hybrid discourse of hegemonic engagement.

In *Strategic Vision*, a cooperative vision of engagement appears as counter to a misguided, neoconservative vision of unipolarity and military power that was expressed in the Bush administration's 'War on Terror,' which Brzezinski characterizes as the wrong grand strategy in the face of an evolving geopolitical landscape.⁶⁶ In this context Brzezinski also refers to the impact of popular culture in shaping a dominant geopolitical imagination in the United States:

American mass media-including Hollywood and TV dramas [...] contributed to shaping a public mood in which fear and hatred were visually focused on actors with personally distinctive Arab features.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., 45. It is interesting to note Brzezinski's elaboration of American exceptionalism as combination of social contract and economic opportunity, offering the individual experience of 'entrepreneurship and citizenship', in comparison with the definition of exceptionalism as collective national trait of the 'American people' in conservative leaning texts (cf. Kagan, *World America Made*; Kaplan, *Revenge of Geography*; Steyn), and their reference to its dependency on an Anglo-Protestant cultural identity. Also, Brzezinski does not seem to count military power as particular hallmark of American exceptionalism.

⁶⁵ Cf. Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington DC: The White House, 2010), p. 10.

⁶⁶ As Brzezinski puts it: "Building off of the public's basic ignorance of world history and geography, profit-motivated mass media exploited fears allowing for the demagogically inclined Bush administration to spend eight years remaking the United States into a crusader state," Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 122. Unlike the representation of American wars as tool for democratization in the discourse of hegemony, the U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq appear as 'reminiscent of nineteenth-century punitive imperial expeditions against primitive and usually disunited tribes,' *ibid.*, 67

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

At the same time *Strategic Vision* demonstrates a continuity of dominant geopolitical thinking, when Brzezinski criticizes a lack of geographical knowledge and education in the United States, just as Halford Mackinder bemoaned the lack of geographical understanding in England over a hundred years ago.

Where the popular American grand strategy discourses of hegemony and engagement coincide, is on the issue of domestic reform: “Americans must understand that our strength abroad will depend increasingly on our ability to confront problems at home.”⁶⁸ Comparing the neoliberal argument for hegemony in *That Used To be Us* with the elaboration of engagement in *Strategic Vision* reveals that both deem overcoming the country’s severe economic and social deficits the necessary condition for shaping America’s future global role and position, and avoiding American decline.⁶⁹ Both also express the belief that a prudent American grand strategy has the ability to focus the country’s energies and motivation in a ‘nationally focused response’ to avert the erosion of America’s influence in the world, just as the United States has successfully met major challenges in the past, from the Great Depression to the Cold War.⁷⁰

In both the hegemony and the engagement discourse, American decline would mean an end to ‘America’s continued capacity to play a major world role.’⁷¹ Unlike the hegemony discourse however, this domestic reform effort can only guarantee

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 46-54. Both discourses of hegemony and engagement count the residual strengths of America’s innovative economy, its demographic dynamics and vivid democracy as hopeful indicators against the possibility of American decline, cf., Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 55; Friedman and Mandelbaum, pp. 13-32; Kagan, *World America Made*, pp. 127-129.

⁷⁰ Cf., Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 64; Friedman and Mandelbaum, pp. 348-360; Kagan, *World America Made*, p. 131

⁷¹ Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 74.

continued American influence in a multipolar world, not perpetuate America's unipolar moment.⁷² The choice America faces, lies between cooperative engagement and further relative decline, not between decline and hegemony as Kagan suggests:⁷³

America's global standing in the decades ahead will depend on its successful implementation of purposeful efforts to overcome its drift towards a socioeconomic obsolescence and to shape a new and stable geopolitical equilibrium on the world's most important continent by far, Eurasia.⁷⁴

From the concern with a continued centrality of the United States in world politics to worries about American decline, and the emphasis on grand strategy as vision for domestic renewal, the neoconservative discourse of unipolar primacy and the liberal discourse of cooperative engagement share many common themes, which reveal the strong intertextual links existing in the popular geopolitical imagination of grand strategy.

What separates the representation of multipolarity in the engagement discourse is that such a scenario is not seen as inherently volatile, but as manageable through concentrated efforts of global governance. Since unipolarity is not considered a viable option, a grand strategy of cooperative engagement is to secure a safe and secure multipolar world order with the United States firmly in its center.⁷⁵

⁷² As Brzezinski points out: "The argument that America's decline would generate global insecurity, endanger some vulnerable states, produce a more troubled North American neighborhood, and make cooperative management of the global commons more difficult is not an argument for U.S. global supremacy. In fact, the strategic complexities of the world in the twenty-first century [...] make such supremacy unattainable." Ibid., pp. 119-120.

⁷³ An absolute decline scenario expects the 'faltering' of America to be followed by a phase of increased volatility and uncertainty in the absence of global leadership, an assessment that shares some of its fears with the geopolitical analysis of Kagan and Kaplan, in particular its worries about the possible territorial ambitions of Russia (Ukraine) and China (Taiwan), cf. *ibid.*, pp. 75-120.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

⁷⁵ A central point where *Strategic Vision* connects with the imagination of classical geopolitics is in its concern for Eurasia. Mackinder's determinist 'heartland' theory appears as interpretive lens for understanding and responding to future challenges in world politics, adapted to a multi-center world: "Given the rise of the newly dynamic but also internationally complex and politically awakened Asia, the new reality is that no power can any longer seek-in Mackinder's words-to 'rule' Eurasia and thus to 'command' the world. America's role [...] has to be subtler and more responsive to Eurasia's new realities of power." Ibid., p. 131

Brzezinski's Eurasian grand strategy envisions a 'larger West' that expands the institutional ties of political, economic and security cooperation between the United States and Europe to Russia and Turkey.⁷⁶ A strategic focus on the 'new East' represents the second half of this geopolitical vision of engagement. Here, the United States is supposed to maintain a significant presence through existing and expanding alliances in East and South East Asia, and at the same time fashion a substantial political and economic partnership with China. As outlined in chapter seven, the 'pivot to Asia' the Obama administration announced in 2011/2012 reflects a geopolitical conceptualization of America as a 'Pacific power' that matches the basic analysis Brzezinski outlines in *Strategic Vision*.⁷⁷ Whatever the outcome of the American-Chinese relationship, rather than imperial dominance and military power projection, Brzezinski and Zakaria both advocate a careful management approach where the United States brokers mutual understanding and goodwill of all great powers and regional partners involved in Asia, and the international system at

⁷⁶ This vision constructs 'northeast Siberia,' or 'eastern Anatolia' as an exiting new frontier for Europe where the 'uninhibited movement of people' and the 'availability of new challenges' could lift 'Europe's current vision' beyond 'social security,' *ibid.*, p. 153. This geopolitical reframing of Turkey and Russia again documents how a particular America-centric narrative of world history prevails in the popular geopolitical imagination, from Kagan's Wild West analogy to Brzezinski's 'new frontier' fantasy. Following the geopolitical tradition of past spatial reorganization practices, for example in Africa, and the Middle East, *Strategic Vision* proposes a redrawing of the boundaries of the 'West:' "It must be the result of a deliberate effort by both America and Europe to embrace more formally Turkey as well as Russia in a larger framework of cooperation based on [...] shared values and on their genuine democratic commitment," *ibid.*, p. 153. The absence of Latin America, Africa and largely the Middle East from this vision again reinforces the image of Western dominance and euro-centrism in the popular discourse of American grand strategy, and its use of key representations of classical geopolitics and realist International Relations theory.

⁷⁷ In line with this argument Brzezinski also spearheaded the idea of a geopolitical leadership tandem, a 'G-2,' or 'Chimerica,' as the British historian Niall Ferguson called it. The G-2 was envisioned as informal setup for the joint management of global governance by the two superpowers, extending from climate change to economic and security issues. This proposition however was rejected in China itself, cf., Henry C K Liu, "Brzezinski's G-2 grand strategy," *Asia Times*, April 22, 2009, accessed March 3, 2013, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China_Business/KD22Cb01.html; Ferguson ended his financial world history, the best selling *The Ascent of Money*, with the transition from the American Empire to 'Chimerica', cf. Niall Ferguson, *The Ascent of Money* (New York: Penguin, 2008), pp. 333-341. Against one of the core strategic priorities in offensive realist theory and classical geopolitics literature, Brzezinski also suggests that the United States should accept a limited Chinese hegemony in Asia: "America should tacitly accept the reality of China's geopolitical preeminence on the mainland of Asia, as well as China's ongoing emergence as predominant Asian economic power," Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 174.

large.⁷⁸ To Zakaria this new role of the United States as ‘honest broker’ rather than traditional ‘superpower’ would primarily involve ‘consultation, cooperation, and even compromise.’⁷⁹

Accordingly, the United States should avoid any ‘direct military involvement in conflicts between rival Asian powers’.⁸⁰ Beyond the ethnocentric, Manichean and deterministic accounts of volatile multipolarity in the grand strategy discourse of hegemony, *Strategic Vision* also points to more specific differences in historical narratives and cultural experiences between West and East. It represents Asia as a geopolitical entity that is unified to varying degrees not only by sentiments of anti-imperialism and the experience of Western domination, but also century long periods of inter-state peace.⁸¹ Remarkably, it also emphasizes the potential impact of dominant geopolitical discourses that emerge in United States itself:

China’s influential and rising role in world affairs is a reality to which Americans will have to adjust-instead of either demonizing it or engaging in thinly concealed wishful thinking about its failure.⁸²

Unlike the often triumphalist and exceptionalist language of the hegemony discourse, which treats the issue of grand strategy, world order and geopolitics almost exclusively as a matter of American agency and willpower, the discourse of engagement tacitly acknowledges that world politics in the 21st century is at least

⁷⁸ To Brzezinski that includes especially Russia, India and China, but applies also to Israel, Iran, Taiwan, South Korea, and Afghanistan, *ibid.*, pp. 123-125. “In Asia, an America cooperatively engaged in multilateral structures, cautiously supportive of India’s development, solidly tied to Japan and South Korea, and patiently expanding [...] cooperation with China is the best source of the balancing leverage needed for sustaining stability in the globally rising new East,” *ibid.*, p. 162.

⁷⁹ Zakaria, *Post-American World*, p. 233.

⁸⁰ Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 125.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 156-161. That a decidedly different historical and cultural experience in the East has shaped a fundamental different way of thinking from the one dominant in West, extending, among other things, to the realm of International Relations is explored in: Richard E. Nesbett, *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why* (New York, Free Press, 2003).

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 169. Here, a condition of domestic renewal is expected to let America ‘have a clearer, less Manichean view of the world’, ‘better able to face a world in which its political preeminence has to be in some degree shared,’ *ibid.* p. 179.

partially outside American control, and will depend just as much on the thoughts and actions of others and how their geopolitical identities and historic narratives will shape their respective grand strategies. *Strategic Vision* and the *Post-American World* hence both outline a geopolitical vision for the United States that seeks cooperation and engagement with others, not imperial dominance, or a self-adulatory benevolent hegemony.

America is coming home – The case for restraint

While the basic discourse of engagement seeks to redefine America's leadership role from a hegemonic hierarchy of subject-object relationships to a more level arrangement of cooperative partnerships, it fundamentally stays committed to the idea of a significant global role of the United States in world politics, and the country's positive influence in international affairs. Based on a decidedly more critical assessment of American grand strategy and national security policy, the basic discourse of restraint in contrast seeks to further limit the use of American power abroad. Rather than engaging the world through extending global partnerships and multiple commitments, it wants the United States to focus on itself and its domestic renewal at home.

Several books have popularized these views on the *New York Times* best sellers list: *Washington Rules*, by Andrew Bacevich presents American grand strategy as misguided imperial vision of global hegemony, perpetuated by a dangerous

American elite consensus in foreign and security policy.⁸³ In her top best selling *Drift* Rachel Maddow, a popular political show host on the liberal inclined MSNBC network critically assesses the evolution of America's military and national security apparatus, which she accuses of wasting financial resources and potentially endangering American liberties.⁸⁴ Finally, *The Untold History of the United States* by the prominent filmmaker Oliver Stone and historian Peter Kuznick provides a critical counter-narrative to the dominant historical interpretation of American exceptionalism and the benevolent influence of the United States in world history.⁸⁵

The basic grand strategy discourse of restraint represents the geopolitical identity of the United States fundamentally different from the previously established basic discourses of hegemony and engagement. Rather than 'American exceptionalism' or the 'American Dream', negative features such as 'imperialism' and 'militarism' are constructed as central characteristics of the United States and its actions in world politics. As Stone and Kuznick point out such critical representations go directly against the mainstream consensus of geopolitical knowledge and historical narrative that prevails in the United States:

That popular and somewhat mythic view, carefully filtered through the prism of American altruism, benevolence, magnanimity, exceptionalism, and devotion to liberty and justice, [...] becomes part of the air that Americans breathe.⁸⁶

The central historic narrative of the restraint discourse casts the role the United States has played in the past in a far less favorable light. Episodes such as the CIA involvement in the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mosaddeq and Chile's

⁸³ Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, [New York Times best seller, no. 29, September 06, 2010]

⁸⁴ Rachel Maddow, *Drift* [New York Times best seller, no. 1, May 06, 2012].

⁸⁵ Stone and Kuznick, *The Untold History of America* [New York Times best seller, no. 15, December 02, 2012].

⁸⁶ Stone and Kuznick, foreword.

Salvador Allende, the Abu Ghraib prisoner scandal, or the civilian casualties in the bombing campaigns against North Vietnam are frequently ignored or represented as unfortunate but ultimately negligible aberrations in America's overwhelmingly benign and positive record in international affairs.⁸⁷ Stone and Kuznick instead reconstruct these episodes as regular and enduring features of American imperialism and the 'darker side of U.S. history.'⁸⁸

The basic grand strategy discourse of restraint repudiates a Manichean and reductionist understanding of world history that continuously describes the United States as morally superior force that successfully vanquishes all enemies in its crusade for freedom. As the *Washington Post* review of Andrew Bacevich's *Washington Rules* sums up this dominant understanding of the geopolitical identity of the United States: "Power and violence are cleansed by virtue: Because America is 'good,' her actions are always benign."⁸⁹

Rather than the ideational foundation for a stable, liberal world order of peace, democracy and free trade, American exceptionalism appears as dangerous combination of national hubris, ideological self-delusion and missionary zeal that has exhausted the country's resources, more often than not produced instability instead of security, has triggered multiple blowback, and engaged the country in activities that betrayed the moral righteousness the American cause of freedom was supposed

⁸⁷ Cf., Kagan, *World America Made*.

⁸⁸ Stone and Kuznick, p. xi.

⁸⁹ Gerard de Groot, "Andrew Bacevich's 'Washington Rules' and John Dower's 'Cultures of War', *The Washington Post*, September 12, 2010, accessed March 04, 2013, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/10/AR2010091003604.html>. Bacevich sees this historic narrative for example in the 'Disneyfication' of World War II and the Cold War, a term coined by Paul Fussell, cf., Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Short American Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 236.

to represent.⁹⁰ As Stone and Kuznick write, ‘American exceptionalism’ as ideological foundation for an American grand strategy of primacy and imperial dominance was particularly influential under President George W. Bush and the neoconservative elements of his administration.

Though the belief that the United States is fundamentally different from other nations [...] was buried for many years in the ruins of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in the jungles of Vietnam, it has reemerged in recent years as a staple of right-wing revisionism.⁹¹

While *The Untold History of the United States* links the myth of American exceptionalism in particular to the ideological convictions of neoconservatives and their hegemonic designs for ‘American empire’ and ‘military dominance,’ its influence is not confined to one particular political party or Presidential administration.⁹² President Obama is located within a continuity of American foreign and security policy, who, in following the dominant geopolitical discourse of American grand strategy, did not fundamentally reinvision the country’s role in the world, but merely changed the style of hegemony.

His was a centrist approach to better managing the American Empire rather than advancing a positive role for the United States in a rapidly evolving world.⁹³

This assessment again points to the congruence between conservative and liberal discourses of American grand strategy that share fundamental assumptions about America’s necessary and beneficial leadership role in the world. Andrew Bacevich, a West Point graduate, Vietnam veteran and long-time critic of American foreign and security policy likewise supports the argument that American hegemony represents a joint vision of conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats about the

⁹⁰ Cf. in this context Johnson, *Dismantling The Empire*.

⁹¹ Stone and Kuznick, p. xiv.

⁹² Ibid., p. xv.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 566.

virtues of America's global preeminence.⁹⁴ In the eyes of Bacevich, this Washington consensus about America's global leadership role is constructed around a central paradigm of military power.

Call them the sacred trinity: an abiding conviction that the minimum essentials of international peace and order require the United States to maintain a *global military presence*, to configure its forces for *global power projection*, and to counter existing or anticipated threats by relying on a policy of *global interventionism*.⁹⁵

American exceptionalism, military dominance, imperialism and global hegemony represent the prevailing 'Other' against which the discourse of restraint builds its own competing grand strategy vision of domestic renewal and self-limitation abroad. The popular texts of Romney, Kagan, Friedman and Mandelbaum and others celebrate American hegemony and hail containment as example for a golden age of American grand strategy vision during the Cold War, whose clarity and purpose are now desperately needed again for the geopolitical challenges of the 21st century. Inverting this argument, the critical discourse of restraint in *The Untold History of the United States* and *Washington Rules* clearly identifies an ongoing continuity of American grand strategy in the form of military primacy and global power projection, in place since World War 2, that should serve as a warning rather than an encouragement for America's future role and position in world politics.⁹⁶ In the words of Bacevich: "(...) adherence to that strategy has propelled the United States into a condition of perpetual war (...)." ⁹⁷

⁹⁴ As Bacevich states: "Mainstream Republicans and mainstream Democrats are equally devoted to this catechism of American statecraft," *Washington Rules*, p. 21; see also Bacevich, *American Empire*; Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (Macmillan, U.S.A., 2008).

⁹⁵ Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, p. 14.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 17-18. This argument is similarly made in Layne, *Peace of Illusions*.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

Here, from the Korean War onwards, the blend of militarism, imperialism and exceptionalism that marks American hegemony has repeatedly proven to be economically costly, wrought with political failure and undermined by overly ambitious goals.⁹⁸ Again Obama appears as an establishment figure, who slightly modified, but did not change the prevailing hegemony consensus. According to *Washington Rules*, American grand strategy continues in its trajectory under the Obama administration, par some ‘cosmetic changes’, because hegemony, or ‘global leadership’ is an item of faith for both neoconservatives and liberals.⁹⁹ “The national security consensus to which every president since 1945 has subscribed persists.”¹⁰⁰

Unlike the basic discourses of hegemony and restraint, which emphasize the benefits of American leadership, *Washington Rules* and *Drift* both stress the costs Americans have to pay for their country’s global role, not just in blood and treasure, but also in the distortion of the ideals of the republic by imperialism and militarism.¹⁰¹ In *Washington Rules*, the alternative to this costly and ultimately unsustainable path is for America to embrace a geopolitical vision of restraint, by creating a ‘city upon a hill,’ invoking the historic narrative of John Winthrop and the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. America should seek to ‘exemplify’ and ‘illuminate’ the world through its ‘self-mastery’ instead of trying to ‘compel’ and

⁹⁸ Cf., *ibid.*, pp. 230-231.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20. This is despite the fact that after the geopolitical apex of America’s exceptionalist vision and hegemonic ambition under George W. Bush, -the Iraq War-, the grand strategy of global primacy started to run out of fuel, and the United States found itself in a different world with the onset of the financial crisis as Bacevich notes: “(...) the Washington rules are propelling the United States toward insolvency and perpetual war. Over the horizon a shipwreck of epic proportion awaits.” *Ibid.*, p. 250.

¹⁰¹ Bacevich details these costs as the ‘untold billions of dollars added annually to national debt’, and ‘the mounting toll of dead and wounded U.S. troops’, but also the trauma of veterans and military families, the ‘perpetuation of ponderous bureaucracies subsisting in a climate of secrecy’, the ‘distortion of national priorities as the military-industrial complex siphons scarce resources’, ‘environmental devastation as a by-product of war’, and the ‘evisceration of civic culture,’ *ibid.*, p. 224.

‘enforce’ others.¹⁰² George Washington and John Quincy Adams are represented as proponents of an American grand strategy of prudent restraint and limitation that held valid until the late 19th century. This representation however at the same time glances over the aggressive expansionism that underlined the historical development of the continental United States in its westward march of ‘manifest destiny,’ including the violent expulsion of Native Americans; it also does not problematize the role of slavery in the ‘city upon a hill.’

The case for restraint is essentially a call for America to finally ‘come home.’

With resources currently devoted to rehabilitating Baghdad or Kabul freed up, the cause of rehabilitating Cleveland and Detroit might finally attract a following.¹⁰³

Maddow likewise refers to one of America’s ‘founding fathers’, Thomas Jefferson and his suspicion of standing armies, in building her argument against a spiraling military-industrial complex, metastasizing executive powers, and the explosion of financial resources invested by the United States in military and intelligence capabilities following 9/11.¹⁰⁴

The basic discourse of restraint builds its key historic narrative around a pre-hegemonic representation of 19th century America, before the country ascended to world power status in the wake of the Spanish-American War, World War 1 and World War 2. The hegemony discourse in turn invokes the historic narrative of America’s victory over Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan as foundation for the lasting stability of the international system. Beyond a debate over the appropriate

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁰³ Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁴ Cf., Maddow, pp. 9-11.

national security policy, the argument over American grand strategy is also a fight over the correct interpretation of American history.

While it does not subscribe to a vision of American decline, the basic discourse of restraint, as exemplary formulated by Bacevich, demands a clear repudiation of American hegemony, military primacy and a global ambition to remake the world in America's image.¹⁰⁵ The consequences of this strategic reorientation would be far reaching, as the Washington consensus of hegemony, and its surrounding political, military, intellectual, and socio-economic structure would be broken up.¹⁰⁶ Following a grand strategy of restraint, the United States would 'maintain only those forces required to accomplish the defense establishment's core mission.' It would therefore 'withdraw from the Persian Gulf and Central Asia,' and never again undertake a 'war of choice' such as Iraq.¹⁰⁷

The proper aim of American statecraft, therefore, is not to redeem humankind or to prescribe some specific world order, nor to police the planet by force of arms. Its purpose is to permit Americans to avail themselves of the right of self-determination as they seek to create a 'more perfect union'.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Here Bacevich also sees a historical transition in defining American geopolitical identity: "Americans can ill afford to indulge any longer in dreams of saving the world, much less remaking it in our image. The curtain is now falling on the American century." Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁶ Bacevich describes these consequences as follows: "Military spending would decrease appreciably. Weapons manufacturers would see their profits plummet. Beltway Bandits would close up shop. The ranks of defense-orientated think tanks would thin. These changes [...] would narrow the range of options available for employing force, obliging policy makers to exhibit greater restraint in intervening abroad." Ibid., p. 240. The argument that a reduction in U.S. military power would force policymakers to consider other options in foreign and security policy, resulting for example in a greater reliance on diplomacy, and in the process increase national security for the United States was made in a similar fashion in Preble, *The Power Problem*. In terms of national security policy Bacevich envisions that the United States should fundamentally alter its definition of military power, in order to bring it in line with a geopolitical vision of restraint. This would include a reassessment of the national defense budget, the stockpile of nuclear weapons, and the global presence of American troops, ibid., pp. 226-227. For Maddow, a dangerous historical trajectory in the United States has given rise to militarism, endemic government secrecy and enormous waste of financial resources. This eroded the country's principal anti-war disposition. "We all have an interest in America having an outstanding military, but that aim is not helped by exempting the military from the competition for resources. With no check on its growth and no rival for its political influence, the superfunded, superempowered national security state has become a leviathan." Maddow, p. 248.

¹⁰⁷ Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, pp. 230-240.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 237.

This reorientation of American grand strategy targets first and foremost the definition of national security and the way Americans should think about war making and the role of the military in defense of the nation. *The Messenger* rather than *Transformers 2* inspires the basic discourse of restraint and its underlying geopolitical imagination. Echoing Bacevich, Maddow argues that, beginning with the Vietnam War and furthered by the machinations of the Reagan administration, the national security policy of the United States has become a deeply flawed endeavor.¹⁰⁹ Referring to the famous ‘Team B’ of neoconservative analysts that provided an alternative and highly exaggerated assessment of Soviet capabilities for the Pentagon in its justification for an American grand strategy vision of military primacy, she states:

If all those Team B cranks in the hawks nest want to indulge in exhaustive paranoia, they can knock themselves out. [...] Our military and weapons prowess is a fantastic and perfectly weighted hammer, but that doesn’t make every international problem a nail.¹¹⁰

As detailed in chapter eight, this argument for a critical appraisal of the usefulness of military power in world politics would be repeated almost exactly in the same words by President Obama in his 2014 speech at the Military Academy of the United States in West Point, documenting the cross-discursive, intertextual links of the basic discourse of restraint between popular culture and policy making.¹¹¹

As described by Bacevich and Maddow an American grand strategy of restraint appears not only as best guide for steering the United States through world politics, but also as domestic necessity for reigning in an out-of-control leviathan of the

¹⁰⁹ Maddow, pp. 9-29.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 250-251. For a detailed analysis of ‘Team B’, see Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War*.

¹¹¹ In the words of President Obama: “Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.” Barack Obama, “Transcript of President Obama’s Commencement Address at West Point.”

national security state. The United States should cut back and downsize its vast military and intelligence apparatus and end its national obsession with global leadership and American exceptionalism as guiding principle for international affairs. Instead of democratizing Iraq and Afghanistan the country should finally engage in ‘nation-building at home’. While this might provide ‘pretty cold comfort to Poles, Rwandans and Congolese’, the country whose democracy, prosperity and freedom American grand strategy should be concerned with above all others, is the United States of America.¹¹²

Nationalism, populism, and American exceptionalism

From the *New York Times* best sellers list a fourth, decidedly populist discursive strand concerning American grand strategy emerges. It originates from the ‘right-of-center’ end of the conservative spectrum, most prominently found in nationally syndicated political talk show radio and conservative leaning media outlets such as *Fox News*, or the *National Review* magazine, where the ‘socialist’ policies of the Obama administration are endangering America’s exceptionalism and its supreme status as dominant global superpower.¹¹³ Its representations of geopolitical identity and formulation of national security policy does not qualify it as a basic grand strategy discourse per se. Rather, it appears as particular nationalist and chauvinist strand of the hegemony discourse that blends an ideological conviction in America’s greatness and uniqueness with a peculiar geopolitical vision of isolationist supremacy. As such it stands apart from the dominant bipartisan conservative-liberal

¹¹² Gary J. Bass, “Endless War”, *The Sunday Book Review*, September 03, 2010, BR21.

¹¹³ For example: *The Rush Limbaugh Show* (Radio); *The Glenn Beck Program* (Radio), *Glenn Beck* (2009-2011, Fox News); *The Sean Hannity Show* (Radio), *Hannity* (Fox News); *The Laura Ingraham Show* (Radio); *The Savage Nation* (Radio).

consensus of American leadership, as well as neoconservative ideas about benevolent American hegemony as foundation of a liberal, international order sustained by American power.

Published in book form, several of these anti-Obama narratives have appeared on prominent places on the *New York Times* best sellers list, representing a popular critique of American grand strategy from the Right: *After America* by Mark Steyn describes the advent of American decline under Obama. Patrick J Buchanan's *Suicide of a Superpower* focuses on the 'endangered' national identity of the United States due to multi-culturalism, while Michael Savage's *Trickle Down Tyranny* describes the 'socialist' agenda of the Obama administration to remake the 'American Dream.' *Screwed* by Dick Morris and Eileen McGann likewise argues that 'globalism' and 'socialism' are threatening America. Laura Ingham's *The Obama Diaries* is written as satirical critique of the policies of the Obama Administration, while Bill O'Reilly's, *Pinheads and Patriots*, explores the 'shift' in the United States occurring under President Obama. Finally *Obama's America* by Dinesh D'Souza portrays President Obama's 'anti-Americanism' and 'radical anti-colonialism'.¹¹⁴ The language in several of these texts is infused with national and racial stereotypes, generalizations, distortions, insults, and prejudice towards ethnic minorities, homosexuals, and the welfare state.¹¹⁵ President Obama in particular is a

¹¹⁴ Mark Steyn, *After America* (Washington DC: Regnery, 2011), [New York Times best seller, no. 4, August 28], 2011; Patrick J. Buchanan, *Suicide Of A Superpower* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011), [New York Times best seller, no. 4, November 06, 2011]; Michael Savage, *Trickle Down Tyranny* (New York: William Morrow, 2012), [New York Times best seller, no. 3, April 22, 2012]; Dick Morris and Eileen McGann, *Screwed* (New York: Broadside Books, 2012), [New York Times best seller, no. 3, May 27, 2012]; Laura Ingraham, *The Obama Diaries* (Chicago: Threshold Editions, 2010), [New York Times best seller, no. 01, August 01, 2010]; Bill O'Reilly, *Pinheads and Patriots* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), [New York Times best seller, no. 2, October 03, 2010]; Dinesh D'Souza, *Obama's America* (Washington DC: Regnery, 2012), [New York Times best seller, no. 5, September 02, 2012].

¹¹⁵ For example: "(...) single women are the most reliable voters for Big Government, even as it turns them into junkies for the state pusher and ensures their kids will reach their adulthood pre-crippled." Steyn, p. 230;

target for attacks: “Like all leftist dictators, Obama is becoming a bloodthirsty monster.”¹¹⁶ In some cases the argument presented is bordering the territory of conspiracy theories, well illustrated by the title of the latest book of the former *Fox News* commentator and political analyst Dick Morris and his partner Eileen McGann: *Here Come the Black Helicopters!* The book seeks to uncover the ‘movement afoot to transfer American autonomy to the United Nations.’¹¹⁷ Here, the case for global governance appears as the sinister plot of cosmopolitan elites and international organizations to end American sovereignty.

To various bestselling right-of-center authors decline represents an existential threat to American exceptionalism, both externally to the superpower status of the United States, and internally. *After America*, written by the political commentator and conservative critic Mark Steyn, which on its cover tellingly features a picture of Uncle Sam lying in the morgue, is a good illustration for the general line of argument in these publications:¹¹⁸ American decline is a reality, mainly due to mounting government debt, which is considered to be unsustainable and undermining American economic and military power.¹¹⁹ In addition, American decline is

¹¹⁶ Savage, p. 281. Michael Savage, who is banned from entering the United Kingdom for ‘seeking to provoke others to serious criminal acts and fostering hatred’, is hosting one of the most successful radio talk shows in the United States. *The Savage Nation* is ranked as the third most listened to radio talk show in the country; reaching an average audience of more than 8 million listeners, “The Top Talk Radio Audiences,” *Talkers Magazine*, accessed August 7, 2014, <http://www.talkers.com/top-talk-radio-audiences/>.

¹¹⁷ Dick Morris and Eileen McGann, *Here Come The Black Helicopters!* (New York: Broadside Books, 2012), [*New York Times* best seller, no. 12, October 28, 2012]. The title refers to a popular myth in certain anti-government circles in the United States, according to which unmarked black helicopters are a sign for an impending takeover of the United States federal government, or the United Nations.

¹¹⁸ Steyn regularly appears as guest on some of the most polar nationally syndicated radio and television talk shows, such as those of Rush Limbaugh, Hugh Hewitt, and Sean Hannity and writes as a columnist for the *National Review*, self-described as ‘America’s most widely read and influential magazine and web site for conservative news, commentary, and opinion’, cf. “Media Kit,” *National Review Online*, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.nationalreview.com/media-kit>.

¹¹⁹ As in the discourse of hegemony, American dominance is constructed in a historical genealogy against its imperial predecessors: “(...) the fall of America would mark the end of a two-century anglophone dominance of geopolitics, of trade, of the global currency [...], and of a world whose order and prosperity most people think of as part of a broad universal march of progress but which, in fact, derive from a very particular cultural inheritance and may well not survive it.” Steyn, pp. 12-13.

represented as historic break with a geopolitical continuity in which an Anglo-Protestant culture was the superior driving force of world history. This shows obvious parallels with the central historic narrative of hegemony that *The World America Made* established. The geopolitical consequences of this transition are constructed as a global political and economic catastrophe: “(...) victims of American retreat were the many parts of the world that had benefited from an unusually benign hegemon.”¹²⁰

Multipolarity again represents a dangerous, volatile future that emerges from the absence of American power. However, unlike the representation of American decline in the basic discourses of hegemony and engagement, here it also appears as symptom of a deeper crisis, originating in misguided ideology and cultural decadence. Beyond matters of economics, politics and demographics, promiscuity, drug abuse, uncontrolled immigration, environmentalism, multiculturalism, the ‘dictate’ of political correctness, and most of all the ‘snuffing out’ of individual responsibility by government entitlement programs and socialist ideology are seen as undermining American identity.¹²¹

While abhorring a future without America as the world’s dominant power, this right-wing discourse of American dominance and exceptionalism partially negates the neoliberal-neoconservative consensus on national security, American hegemony and the country’s leadership role in a liberal world order.¹²² Instead of representing

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 325.

¹²¹ Cf., Buchanan; D’Souza; Ingraham; Savage; Steyn; Dennis Prager, *Still The Best Hope* (New York: Broadside Books, 2012), [*New York Times* best seller, no. 28, May 27, 2012].

¹²² In *After America*, Thomas L. Friedman, the *New York Times*, and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History* in particular are singled for promoting the misguided ideology of globalization, see Steyn, p. 17.

hegemony as necessary condition for globalization, where the consent of others legitimizes American leadership and power, globalization appears as a false idol, exhausting the country's resources.¹²³ "To its worshippers, globalization is some kind of mysterious metaphysical force that's out there remaking our assumptions about the planet."¹²⁴

Globalization is represented as an elitist project, designed for the interest of the global financial industry, international organizations, and government bureaucracies, which all follow a misguided vision of cosmopolitan universalism, or 'globalism'.¹²⁵ Echoing this sentiment, the best selling *Trickle Down Tyranny* by conservative radio talk show host Michael Savage states: "Global government is nothing more than warmed-over Marxist-Leninist communism on a planetary scale."¹²⁶

The populist discourse of America's exceptionalist and isolationist supremacy constructs a grand strategy of 'America first.' Instead of wasting resources by following an internationalist vision of liberal world order, the United States should focus its energies to strengthen its economic and political system at home. In its support for small government, embrace of libertarian-conservative ideas of economics, and concern with conserving national resources, this vision of exceptionalist supremacy brings forward its own version of the restraint argument, not as progressive critique of American dominance and imperialism, but as

¹²³ As Steyn comments: "That's the United States the world needs: in security terms, the order maker; in economic terms, the order placer. Unfortunately, neither role is sustainable. America is on course to be the first great power in history literally to shop till we drop." Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

¹²⁵ Cf., Morris and McGann, *Screwed*, p. 1; Savage, p. 302. As described by Morris and McGann in *Screwed*: Unwilling to trust the American people with the tremendous power of global leadership, they [American and European bureaucrats] are trying to marginalize the United States and subsume it within a superstructure of global governance. Morris and McGann, *Screwed*, p. 9.

¹²⁶ Savage, p. 302.

conservative charge against ‘big government’ and ‘un-American’ multilateralism.¹²⁷ On the other hand, there is general consensus that an alternative liberal grand strategy vision of cooperative engagement and multipolarity will only strengthen America’s enemies and leave the United States weaker and more endangered.¹²⁸ “In a post-American world, the kind of world Barack Obama is committed to building, America will be surrounded on all sides by hostile forces (...).”¹²⁹

Against the otherness of globalization, socialism and multipolarity, American exceptionalism is represented as the true American self, the source of America’s strength and national greatness and the ideational foundation that should animate the country’s grand strategy. Accordingly, one of the main charges brought forward against President Obama by his conservative and right-wing critics, is that he does not believe in American exceptionalism and does not employ it as foundation for his geopolitical vision of U.S. foreign and security policy.

As Bill O’Reilly, multiple bestselling author and host of the *Fox News Channel*’s top rated *The O’Reilly Factor* explains: “In addition, Barack Obama is an internationalist, which means he believes America does not have an ‘exceptional’ place in the world.”¹³⁰ *The Obama Diaries*, which topped the *New York Times* non-fiction best sellers list in August 2010, devoted its entire opening chapter to the issue of American exceptionalism and its endangered status under the Obama

¹²⁷ “Americans face a choice: you can rediscover the animating principles of the American idea—of limited government, a self-reliant citizenry, and the opportunities to exploit your talents to the fullest—or you can join most of the rest of the western world in terminal decline.” Ibid., p. 350.

¹²⁸ Cf., Steyn, p. 347.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 279; see also Savage, pp. 302-350; Morris and McGann, *Screwed*.

¹³⁰ O’Reilly, p. 87.

administration.¹³¹ Written as a satirical ‘insider’s account’ of the administration by the conservative political commentator and radio talk show host Laura Ingraham, the book states:

His recitation of America’s purported sins creates an equivalency between the United States and nations that do not begin to approach our economic, military, or cultural strength. [...] As described by the president, the United States seems like just another defective member of the League of Nations.¹³²

Obama’s approach to international relations and foreign policy is seen as deeply flawed, because it is not rooted in the belief in American exceptionalism, but supposedly motivated by a negative view of the international role the United States has played in the past. President Obama, who has frequently stressed international cooperation and multilateral approaches to global governance, and has seemingly distanced himself from the unilateralism associated with the previous Bush administration, is criticized for constantly ‘apologizing’ for America.¹³³

The idea of cooperative engagement with countries that are ‘weaker’ than the United States appears as violation of the values American exceptionalism is supposed to represent. In the *Obama Diaries*, beyond the role of the President, Hollywood liberals, such as James Cameron, Oliver Stone or Tom Hanks are singled out for undermining the belief in American exceptionalism and its historical foundations in films such as *Avatar*, or the *Green Zone* that cast the United States in a villainous role, and do not appropriately celebrate American heroism.¹³⁴ This reference shows the significance Hollywood is attributed in shaping the general public’s perception of

¹³¹ Ingraham, pp. 24-30.

¹³² Ibid., p. 13.

¹³³ Ibid., 12; O’Reilly, p. 31.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 20. Tom Hanks is criticized in particular for remarks he made in context with the World War 2 TV series *Pacific* he produced together with Stephen Spielberg. Hanks described the Pacific campaign as one of ‘racism and terror’ and pointed out the racism prevailing in the United States concerning the view of the Japanese enemy; a critical reflection and intervention against the ‘good war’ narrative, Ingraham clearly finds unacceptable, cf., *ibid.*

geopolitical identity and its central role in the popular discourse of national security, yet drawing from the analysis in the previous chapter it must be stated that far from undermining American exceptionalism, the majority of popular Hollywood movies seems in fact to support the image of military primacy and global leadership of the United States.¹³⁵

The argument that American grand strategy under President Obama is repudiating primacy, and essentially negating American exceptionalism, was further developed, and pursued in a more extreme fashion by the best selling *Obama's America*, which was followed by a successful documentary film, both created by the conservative political commentator and author Dinesh D'Souza.¹³⁶ Here, President Obama is accused of purposefully aiming to weaken the United States and fasten American decline due to his ideological roots in radical anti-colonialism, inherited from his Kenyan father.¹³⁷ The post-American world appears as the intended result of one man's hereditary ideological conviction and his subsequent quest to rectify the unfair distribution of wealth and power in the international system.¹³⁸

Fears that President Obama, due to his 'exotic' upbringing, multicultural background, and ideological disposition, is somehow 'un-American,' were

¹³⁵ In this context see also the exploration of American exceptionalism in Hollywood film in Deborah Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 157-166.

¹³⁶ The documentary *2016 Obama's America* has grossed over \$33.45 million in the United States, and was distributed in over 2,000 theaters. It is the second highest-grossing political documentary since 1982, topped only by *Fahrenheit 9/11*, cf., "Obama's America," Box Office Mojo, accessed September 17, 2014 <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=2016obamasamerica.htm>.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

¹³⁸ In the words of D'Souza: "He subscribes to an ideology that says it is good for America to go down so that the rest of the world can come up. He wants Americans to be poorer so that Brazilians and Colombians can be richer. He thinks it would be beneficial to us and to the world for there to be many rich and powerful nations, with no single nation able to dominate or dictate terms to any other;" *ibid.*, p. 258.

frequently raised on the American Right.¹³⁹ The American President is seen as undermining or negating the exceptionalism of the United States, embracing America's enemies, while simultaneously trying to make America more like others, especially socialist Europe, through the expansion of government programs, most notably the Affordable Healthcare Act, or 'Obama care.' As Steyn explains in his assessment of the 2009 State of the Union Address:

The animating principles of the American idea were entirely absent from Obama's vision—unless by American exceptionalism you mean an exceptional effort to harness an exceptionally big government in the cause of exceptionally massive spending.¹⁴⁰

In addition, the administration's alleged weak stance in the Iranian nuclear crisis, its mismanagement of the Arab Spring, and the strained relationship with Israel are frequently singled out for conservative criticism.¹⁴¹ Beyond a mere dispute about politics, the foreign and security policy of President Obama and his team are scrutinized for being anti-American by its very design. A white, Anglo-Protestant identity is supposed to have been the cultural foundation for America's greatness and global leadership.¹⁴² In this narrative, the election of President Obama has signaled a disruption to this original 'American' identity. As demonstrated in the geopolitical analysis of Kagan, Friedman and Kaplan, in popular grand strategy discourses preserving American identity at home and maintaining its status as dominant power in the world are intrinsically linked.

¹³⁹ Cf. D'Souza; Savage; Steyn.

¹⁴⁰ Steyn, p. 328.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Savage, pp. 302-350.

¹⁴² Cf. Buchanan; Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

Conclusion

Employing the *New York Times* non-fiction best sellers list as discursive site for examining the popular geopolitical imagination of national security, and its production as generally accepted knowledge, the thesis has established three basic discourses of American grand strategy: hegemony, engagement and restraint. This basic categorization is developed from the distinctive use of identity constructs, historic narratives and policy recommendations in the relevant texts associated with each grand strategy discourse.

Hegemony, engagement and restraint, while not representing completely independent entities that operate in isolation from each other, formulate geopolitical visions for the role of the United States in world politics that sufficiently sets them apart from each other. They prioritize different historic narratives, differ in their basic perception of the trajectory of power polarity in the international system and its implications, and they recommend fundamentally different designs in foreign and national security policy, defense matters and the projection of military power.

Hegemony, engagement and restraint serve as labels to mark relevant distinctions between American grand strategy discourses, and how these articulate particular visions of geopolitical imagination. However, they are ultimately constructed as an analytical category in order to facilitate the investigation of American grand strategy, and the interlinking of geopolitical identity and national security under the Obama presidency. They cannot claim any objective materiality beyond an interpretive

construction. Frequently, there also exists considerable overlap and congruence between them.

Both Brzezinski and Bacevich for example deemphasize the usefulness of military power in world politics and denounce an American grand strategy of unipolar primacy favored by neoconservatives. And, as expressed in *The World America Made* and *The Post-American World*, discourses of hegemony and engagement both share a fundamental assumption that American leadership, either as ‘benevolent hegemon’ or ‘honest broker’ is a necessary, beneficial and stabilizing influence in international affairs. The liberal critique of the national security apparatus by Maddow, Bacevich’s charge against the Washington consensus of hegemony, and the right-of-center polemics of *After America* also all share a concern with America’s fiscal situation, and its waste of economic resources to act as the ‘world’s policeman.’

Finally, the analysis of popular geopolitical discourse in this chapter has further established that ‘American leadership’ represents a dominant identity construct in the popular geopolitical imagination. Neoconservative scholars, liberal political commentators and right-of-center populists alike employ the historic narrative of hegemonic stability. This suggests that any alternative formulation of American grand strategy primarily contends with a geopolitical vision of hegemony that is firmly culturally embedded. In the popular discourse of hegemony, supported by Kagan, Friedman, and Kaplan, ‘American exceptionalism’ for example is a staple feature in representing the geopolitical identity of the United States in comparison to other nations. In its more populist form, overtones of American nationalism, and

issues of racial and cultural superiority take center stage in defining America's 'exceptional' role in the world, and what the country must undertake to preserve its preeminence and uniqueness, both abroad and at home.

Stone and Kuznick's *The Untold History of the United States* and Bacevich's *Washington Rules* document how the restraint discourse directly challenges this dominant historic narrative of American exceptionalism, and a bi-partisan conservative-liberal consensus of American leadership, military supremacy and global power projection. The best selling works of Brzezinski and Zakaria on the other hand seek to reframe the geopolitical identity of the United States from 'sole superpower' to central hub of the international system. Providing the most comprehensive formulation of an alternative grand strategy vision of cooperative engagement in a multipolar world, they directly contradict the neo-imperial and isolationist-supremacist fantasies of *The Revenge of Geography*, *The Next 100 Years*, or *Trickle Down Tyranny*. In any case, the deeply embedded, conventional narrative of American exceptionalism, superiority and preeminence appears as serious obstacle for any political reformulation of American grand strategy towards greater cooperative engagement, or more restraint in the global projection of military power.

In *Washington Rules* Andrew Bacevich attributes the production and re-production of the dominant grand strategy discourse of hegemony and exceptionalism to 'Washington.' An inter-locking set of institutions, combining the government, the military, mainstream media, weapons corporations, big banks, leading universities, national security think tanks, and select interest groups, which together form an elite

consensus on national security and geopolitics.¹⁴³ Although Bacevich does not make it explicit, from a critical perspective ‘Washington’ represents a dominant concentration of power/knowledge that defines grand strategy through dominant discourses of geopolitics and national security in elite power networks, from Hollywood to the *New York Times*, and the Pentagon to the Council of Foreign Relations, ranging from the popular to the formal and practical realm. Hence, it is in the realm of discourse where a critical analysis can attempt to validate Bacevich’s charge of an ongoing continuity of hegemony, or the conservative counter-argument that describes the foreign and security policy of President Obama not as continuation of American Empire, but as globalist antithesis to the idea of American exceptionalism and supremacy.

¹⁴³ Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, p. 15; pp. 228-229. According to Bacevich, this network legitimizes and perpetuates American hegemony motivated by self-interest and institutional inertia: “The Washington rules deliver profit, power, and privilege to a long list of beneficiaries: elected and appointed officials, corporate executives and corporate lobbyists, admirals and generals, functionaries staffing the national security apparatus, media personalities, and policy intellectuals from universities and research organizations.” Ibid., p. 226.

4. The American grand strategy discourse in International Relations

Most foreign policy experts are pushing for a new grand strategy (...). They are disposed toward big ideas and toward wedging all the pieces of a problem snugly together into one big, neat theory. They are not enamored of loose ends or unintended consequences, which call their expertise into question.¹ – Leslie H. Gelb

Do grand strategies matter? They definitely matter to strategists. These experts regularly bemoan a lack of strategic far-sightedness of politicians and the absence of a geopolitical vision in conducting foreign and security policy. The grand strategies they design are supposed to help steer the ‘ship of state’ and chart its course through the uncertain waters of world politics.² If a country seems to lack a grand strategy, it is said to be unclear about its future course, the threats it faces, or the long-term interests it pursues.³ Hence, it is in the realm of expert knowledge and formal discourse where grand strategies are articulated in their purest intellectual form, formulated in elite circles for elite audiences, yet not encumbered by the daily pressures of policy-making, or the troubles of domestic politics.

Previously, the thesis has explored the popular imagination of geopolitics and national security in Hollywood films and non-fiction bestsellers, and the political significance of these seemingly entertainment-oriented discursive domains. As demonstrated, visions of geopolitics and national security are regularly being popularized for the consumption of mass audiences, constituting an important site for the production of dominant knowledge in the realm of common sense experience.

¹ Leslie H. Gelb, “Necessity, Choice, and Common Sense,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 3 (2009): p. 68.

² Cf., Drezner, “Does Obama Have A Grand Strategy?,” p. 61.

³ Cf., Wang Jisi, “China’s Search for a Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 68-79.

From this critical analysis of popular culture, hegemony, engagement, and restraint were identified as three basic discourses of American grand strategy.

Building upon these findings, this chapter continues the critical analysis of American grand strategy, and looks at how geopolitical visions of national security are constructed around the concept of expert knowledge that claims authority through its status as formal expertise.⁴ This connects methodologically to what Ó Tuathail described as the critical engagement of the intellectuals, institutions and texts that define geopolitical thought in formal geopolitics.⁵

The particular form of knowledge under investigation here can be defined as the technical or scientific knowledge of experts and intellectuals, considered to be ‘true, objective and incontestable.’⁶ As such it can serve as the base for political decision-making and may only be challenged and called into question by other experts, the knowledge itself located beyond political reproach due to its supposed scientific impartiality.⁷ As Jenny Edkins writes, the role of the expert as a knowledge technician is to provide answers for decision makers, allowing them to close down the political debate.⁸ Beyond merely offering a neutral, scientific-technological observation however, the experts investigated here actively seek to influence the political end themselves, to influence or change the grand strategy of the United

⁴ Cf. Ó Tuathail, “Understanding Critical Geopolitics,” pp. 110-113. Two of the contemporary ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ Ó Tuathail specifically mentions in this context, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski are featured as authors in *Foreign Affairs* and are analyzed in this chapter.

⁵ Ibid., p. 110.

⁶ Jenny Edkins, “Ethics and Practices of Engagement: Intellectuals as Experts.” *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): p. 66.

⁷ Ibid., p. 66; see also Edkins, *Poststructuralism & international relations*.

⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

States, and the way the country pursues its national security.⁹ This locates the formal discourse of U.S. grand strategy at the nexus of political science and policy making.

As Biersteker has pointed out, the reciprocal interrelationship of theory and practice in international relations and the sub-field of international security is manifold, from the use of theoretically informed framework concepts of world politics, consciously or unconsciously by political practitioners to the interpretation of international practices by IR scholars.¹⁰ In the context of formal grand strategy discourse, the theory-practice connection is largely centered on a dominant understanding of U.S. global leadership in world politics. This key representation of superior economic and military power and its political implications inform the geopolitical imagination of major policy makers as well as the majority of research expertise in mainstream IR scholarship.

Looking to the realm of formal discourse and expert knowledge, the thesis aims to further map the construction of dominant knowledge, with the academic discipline of International Relations as a key site for the production of what is considered grand strategy expertise. The previous location of grand strategy in the respective IR literature served to mark the theoretical and methodological distinctiveness of the thesis from the established, conventional perspective of rationalist-positivist grand strategy research. The analysis of grand strategy and IR provided in this chapter now

⁹ In front of the background of the Iraq War Edward Said explained in the 2003 preface to his book *Orientalism*: “One specifically American contribution to the discourse of empire is the specialized jargon of policy experts. You don’t need Arabic or Persian or even French to pontificate about how the democracy domino effect is just what the Arab world needs. Combative and woefully ignorant policy experts whose world experience is limited to the Beltway grind out books on “terrorism” and liberalism, or about Islamic fundamentalism and American foreign policy, or about the end of history, all of it vying for attention and influence quite without regard for truthfulness or reflection or real knowledge. What matter is how efficient and resourceful it sounds, and who might go for it, as it were.” Said, *Orientalism* (preface 2003), p. xvi.

¹⁰ Thomas J. Biersteker, “Theory and Practice in International Security Studies,” *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 6 (2010): pp. 599-608.

occurs within the context of a critical discourse analysis. The focus of interest lies especially on how formal expertise is intertextually connected to the realm of political practice in establishing and maintaining grand strategy as dominant geopolitical knowledge, and how this interconnection, its ‘complicity in the practices of statecraft’ did manifest during the Obama administration in the period observed.¹¹ As Edkins, Campbell and others have pointed out, from a critical perspective, the role of IR scholars as intellectuals does not only extend to their practical involvement in international politics, but must also consider the ethical dimension of their engagement with discourses of security.¹² From a critical point of view, the investigation of dominant sites of knowledge production, such as leading IR journals, and discursive producers, such as prominent grand strategy experts, must be self-aware in the sense that by accepting the construct of leading status, the research at the same time reproduces a discursive dominance it aims to investigate.

However, it does so in the attempt to uncover the ‘unacknowledged assumptions about an unproblematic reality’ that underlie the epistemological construction of these scientific knowledge formations.¹³ As Derrida wrote in *Writing and Difference*: “We cannot give up this metaphysical complicity without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity.”¹⁴

¹¹ Richard Ashley, “The Achievements of Post-Structuralism,” in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 246.

¹² Edkins, “Ethics and Practices of Engagement;” David Campbell, “Beyond Choice: The Onto-politics of Critique,” *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): pp. 127-134; Larry N. George, “Pharmacotic War and the Ethical Dilemmas of Engagement,” *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): pp. 115-125.

¹³ Cf., Campbell, “Beyond Choice,” p. 128. A view on alternative formulations of expert knowledge on grand strategy that fail to penetrate into the IR mainstream could also serve to further offset this dominance bias in the discourse analysis, however this lies outside of the scope of research presented here. In this context, see also Biersteker’s emphasis on paying attention to ‘scholars from the peripheries,’ Biersteker, p. 603.

¹⁴ Quoted in, Edkins, *Poststructuralism & international relations*, p. 74.

Methodologically, the analysis of formal discourse does not employ indexes of popularity, as with the analysis of highest grossing films and bestselling books, but considers the measure of influence and impact that is being assigned to academic research and expert knowledge. Both function as indicators for the discursive formation of dominant knowledge as they tie into respective domains of power/knowledge in popular and formal discourse.

Here, the IR journal *Foreign Affairs* stands out as a publication that is consistently being regarded as world leading in its field, and as dominant voice in the intellectual debate on American grand strategy. This is expressed for example in statistical measures, such as the impact factor index of publisher Thompson Reuters, and the credentials awarded to the journal by prominent members of the U.S. foreign and security policy establishment.¹⁵

¹⁵ Impact factors are statistical measures by which research journals are validated based on the number of citations of published articles. In a given year, the impact factor of a journal is the average number of citations received per paper published in that journal during the two preceding years. The impact factor is then used to compare different journals within an academic field, such as International Relations. According to Thomson Reuters, its Journal Citation Reports (JCR), which calculate the annual journal impact factors, are the world's most influential resource for evaluating peer-reviewed publications; "Thomson Reuters Research Analytics Unveils 2013 Release of Its Journal Citation Reports," Thomson Reuters, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://thomsonreuters.com/press-releases/062013/2013-journal-citation-reports>; *Foreign Affairs* regularly advertises its elite status with a quote from President Harry S. Truman: "Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers."

Fig. 15 Thompson Reuters Journal Citation Reports 2009-2013
Top 10 International Relations journals ranked by impact factor

Rank	Journal Title	Total Cites	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor
2009				
1	INTERNATIONAL SECURITY	2075	3.243	5.303
2	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	2598	3.155	2.869
3	JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH	1529	2.468	2.677
4	WORLD POLITICS	2134	2.114	2.815
5	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	3465	2	4.4
6	SPACE POLICY	241	1.707	1.454
7	BIOSECURITY BIOTERRORISM	250	1.644	1.519
8	INTERNATIONAL STUDIES QUARTERLY	1363	1.625	2.459
9	J. OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION	2410	1.507	3.015
10	SECURITY DIALOGUE	390	1.49	1.807

2010				
1	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	3641	3.551	5.059
2	INTERNATIONAL SECURITY	1525	3.444	4.214
3	WORLD POLITICS	2011	2.889	3.903
4	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1775	2.557	2.263
5	COMMON MARKET LAW REVIEW	702	2.194	2.071
6	MARINE POLICY	1524	2.053	1.961
7	JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION	2562	1.883	3.165
8	INT. JOURNAL OF TRANS. JU.S.TICE	139	1.756	1.923
9	SECURITY DIALOGUE	372	1.6	1.51
10	INT. STUDIES QUARTERLY	1690	1.523	2.427

2011				
1	WORLD POLITICS	2134	3.025	3.489
2	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	3441	2.98	4.377
3	COMMON MARKET LAW REVIEW	602	2.422	1.845
4	INTERNATIONAL SECURITY	1557	2.333	3.529
5	JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION	2426	2.237	2.922
6	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1645	2.034	2.103
7	JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH	1522	1.98	2.152
8	BIOSECURITY AND BIOTERRORISM	284	1.939	1.504
9	MARINE POLICY	1741	1.865	1.986
10	INT. POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY	140	1.381	1.663

2012				
1	COMMON MARKET LAW REVIEW	765	3	2.074
2	INTERNATIONAL SECURITY	1729	2.739	3.359
3	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	3968	2.49	4.643
4	WORLD POLITICS	2159	2.308	3.716
5	MARINE POLICY	2320	2.23	2.407
6	JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH	1782	2.191	2.526
7	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1684	2.09	2.055
8	NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY	427	1.93	1.493
9	INT. JOURNAL OF TRANS. JU.S.TICE	209	1.791	1.88
10	JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION	2620	1.701	2.885

2013				
1	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1839	3.347	2.447
2	INTERNATIONAL SECURITY	1452	2.975	3.010
3	MARITIME POLICY	3283	2.621	2.948
4	INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION	3803	2.600	3.984
5	JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH	1907	2.280	2.643
6	COMMON MARKET LAW REVIEW	506	2.043	1.672
7	SECURITY DIALOGUE	521	1.952	2.007
8	NEW POLITICAL ECONONY	450	1.656	1.766
9	WORLD POLITICS	2252	1.650	3.274
10	BIOSECURITY AND BIOTERRORISM	334	1.618	1.532

The impact factor appears as one the ‘instruments that form and accumulate knowledge,’ as Foucault described it, embedded in mechanisms of power/knowledge and its various networks.¹⁶ In short, the impact factor is used as a measure for identifying world leading research in IR, and as such it serves as an index for mapping the dominant discursive production of academic expertise in the United States in regard to American grand strategy and geopolitics. In 2013 for example *Foreign Affairs* had an impact factor of 3.347, ranking it as the most influential journal in the field of International Relations. In the four-year period between 2009 and 2012 the journal was consistently ranked among the top ten IR journals.

The style and structure of articles featured in *Foreign Affairs* normally follows a certain schematic, either treating current policy issues, or historical case studies, following a problem-solving approach, where causes are identified and conclusions drawn based on a rationalist and materialist analysis of world politics. Constructivist, or even critical approaches are rarely present in these discursive sites, and limit the possible range of theoretical and methodological perspectives offered, despite the self-proclaimed openness and neutrality. Its status as elite publication makes it a

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (London: Macmillan, 2003), p. 32.

prime site for investigating dominant definitions of American grand strategy, in the context of power/knowledge and the discursive construction of the ‘truth of IR’.¹⁷

There exists a discursive cross-over at the highest level of strategy in the realm of formal expertise, between hegemony, engagement and restraint that confutes the reductionist logic of grand strategy as a unitary, strictly coherent means ends chain. Instead of clearly delineated grand strategy discourses that construct a coherent link between representations and practices, the majority of formal expertise on American grand strategy attempts to reconcile contradictory constructs of geopolitical identity and national security, between global leadership and superpower status on the one hand, and cooperative partnership and restraint on the other hand. This reflects the complexity and multidimensional nature of geopolitical thinking and the synchronicity of its various dominant representations that operate in constant competition with each other, a fact ignored by the mainstream of grand strategy expertise.

Based on the critical analysis of formal discourse provided here, and especially the examination of intertextual links between formal expertise, popular imagination and political practice, this chapter will introduce a counter-perspective in regard to grand strategy thinking, through the concept of hybrid discourses that combine elements of at least two distinct basic discourses of grand strategy. Thus, the thesis will introduce the concepts of hegemonic engagement and hegemonic restraint as geopolitical

¹⁷ Cf. Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), p. 2. Methodologically, this chapter analyses articles appearing in the thirty-four issues of *Foreign Affairs* that were published between January/February 2009 and July/August 2014, in Vol. 88 - Vol. 93. The analysis is focused on articles centered on issues of U.S. national security, American grand strategy and geopolitics, comparable to the range of content featured by the books selected from the *New York Times* non-fiction bestsellers list, to investigate the co-constitution of representations of identity and political practice in formal grand strategy discourse.

visions prevalent in the realm of academic research and intellectual debate. This also further evolves the discourse model of grand strategy that was developed from the previous two chapters and the analysis of popular imagination and common sense sites of knowledge production.

U.S. grand strategy experts, IR theory and the impact of academic research on political practice

As described in the review of research literature, the concept of grand strategy originated from a scholarly attempt to analyze the most appropriate use of state power towards the goal of national security. Within these parameters it remains a powerful intellectual concept and significant academic preoccupation in International Relations.¹⁸ At Yale University for example, the Bradley-Johnson Program, which secured a \$17.5 million, fifteen-year endowment in 2006, aims to examine the theory and practice of grand strategy, defined as ‘the calculated relation of means to large ends.’¹⁹ The multitude of research books and journal articles on grand strategy, as well as various study programs on strategy, strategic planning and grand strategy, all usually with a positivist and rationalist focus of analysis, is testament to the strong and ongoing academic presence of grand strategy as specialist form of geopolitical expertise and its allure as ‘big picture’ thinking.

¹⁸ Study programs in Grand Strategy are currently run by several universities in the United States, notably Yale University, Duke University, the University of Texas, Columbia University, and Temple University.

¹⁹ Cf., “Studies in Grand Strategy.” The Bradley-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy, Spring 2010, January 16, 2010 Update, Yale University; in the program, the rationalist study of historical and contemporary cases focuses on great powers, from the Roman Empire to the United States, and the established pantheon of strategic thinkers, ranging from Thucydides to Machiavelli, Clausewitz and the representatives of classical geopolitics like Henry Kissinger. The course ends with a crisis simulation exercise where students take on the role of leading national security officials, including the President; cf., Thomas Meaney and Stephen Wertheim, “Grand Flattery: The Yale Grand Strategy Seminar,” *The Nation*, May 28, 2012, accessed August 22, 2014, <http://www.thenation.com/article/167807/grand-flattery-yale-grand-strategy-seminar#>.

The intellectual outlook hover is at once conservative, reductionist and retrospective.

As Meaney and Wertheim have observed:

Yale's grand strategists openly long for the intellectual certainties they associate with the cold war, when the Soviet threat made strategy seem indispensable.²⁰

John Lewis Gaddis, a leading conservative historian of the Cold War period, and together with Charles Hill and Paul Kennedy one of the teachers of the Yale program has explained:

Grand strategy is endangered [...] for in the absence of sufficiently grave threats to concentrate our minds, there are insufficient incentives to think in these terms.²¹

Within academia, understood here as the mainstream of IR research in the United States, it is mainly a contest of neorealism and liberal institutionalism on the one hand, and within neorealism on the other hand that frames the theoretical debate on American grand strategy.²² This debate only produces a limited scope of new ideas about the American role in world politics, since it is largely confined to examining the global leadership of the United States, and how it can be materially sustained among shifting geopolitical parameters of military and economic power balances and existential threat scenarios. However, this limited positivist-rationalist discourse fails to actually fulfill its own promise of coherence and cohesiveness in the formulation of grand strategy.

While hegemony, understood as neo-conservative vision of military supremacy and unilateral primacy has come under scrutiny with many foreign policy and security experts, the idea of global leadership of the United States remains pivotal to the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Quoted in, *ibid.*

²² See also Brendan Rittenhouse Green, "Two Concepts of Liberty." *International Security* 37, no. 2 (2012): pp. 9-43; on IR theory as site of academic knowledge production, see Milliken, p. 238.

majority of geopolitical thinking in these expert circles. As a consequence, the focus of formal discourse has shifted from the ‘unipolar moment’ and the singularity of U.S. power to ‘burden sharing’ and cooperation, incorporating elements of multilateral engagement within the hegemony leitmotif. In a similar way, proponents of retrenchment seek to lower the costs and risks of the United States’ global posture, and especially to reduce its military footprint, while maintaining a vision of American leadership in the world, a form of hegemonic restraint, or ‘leading from behind.’²³

Some realists, like Stephen Brooks and Will Wohlforth, partially basing their argument in hegemonic stability theory, promote the global leadership of the United States as a necessary condition for the functioning of the liberal world order.²⁴ They do not perceive America to be in decline or expect an end of structural unipolarity in the international system. As a consequence, they propose a grand strategy of hegemonic engagement, or what they refer to as ‘deep engagement,’ continuing an established trajectory of U.S. global leadership.²⁵

For more than sixty years, the United States has sought to advance its core interests in security, prosperity, and domestic liberty by pursuing three overlapping objectives: managing the external environment to reduce [...] threats to U.S. national security; promoting a liberal economic order to expand the global economy [...]; and creating, sustaining, and revising the global institutional order (...).²⁶

Their expertise on U.S. hegemony most clearly reflects the mainstream in grand strategy discourse and is the closest intertextual match of academic research and popular imagination, from Michael Bay’s *Transformers* to Mandelbaum’s and

²³ Cf., Leslie H. Gelb, “In Defense of Leading from Behind,” *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2013, accessed October 24, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/in_defense_of_leading_from_behind.

²⁴ Cf., Brooks and Wohlforth, *World Out Of Balance*.

²⁵ Brooks, Ikenberry, Wohlforth. “Don’t Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment.”

²⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

Friedman's *That Used To Be Us*. The authors' advocacy of hegemonic engagement also reveals a discursive point of connection between neorealism and liberal institutionalism, as the co-authorship of Brooks and Wohlforth with John Ikenberry documents. Leading representatives of realism and liberal institutionalism together argue against retrenchment, urging America not to 'come home.'²⁷ At the same time, this outspoken belief in the virtue of America's global leadership also forms a cornerstone in the political rhetoric of major officials in the Obama administration, as laid out in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*.

Other prominent realists, such as John Mearsheimer, Stephen Walt, or Christopher Layne are in turn highly critical of America's global primacy.²⁸ They perceive it as a dangerous over-extension of American resources, wasted on policing the world, while the United States could be kept safe at far less cost to the American taxpayer and the U.S. military. Here, the idea of 'imperial overstretch,' developed by Paul Kennedy is a major concern in that American decline is the result of global aspirations that outstrip diminishing national capabilities and domestic resources.²⁹ As a consequence, an exclusive concentration on military supremacy and global hegemony could undermine the United States and weaken the domestic foundation of its power.³⁰

²⁷ Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no.1 (2013): pp. 130-142.

²⁸ See, Mearsheimer, "Imperial by Design;" Layne, "The End of Pax Americana;" Walt, "Offshore balancing."

²⁹ Kennedy predicts such a course for United States as it follows the example of empires and great powers of the past, such as the Roman Empire, Imperial Spain, and Victorian England, cf. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Power from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 514-532; see also, Daniel W. Drezner, "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think)," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (2013): pp. 52-79; Stephen Walt, "10 Lessons on Empire," *Foreign Policy*, July 13, 2009, accessed November 20, 2013, http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/07/13/ten_lessons_on_empire.

³⁰ Drezner, "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay," p. 79.

Mearsheimer for example identifies ‘global hegemony’ or ‘global dominance’ as a misguided grand strategy that has been in place ever since the end of the Cold War, and that continues under President Obama, albeit with more liberal-institutionalist auspices.³¹ As Mearsheimer argues:

The United States needs a new grand strategy. Global dominance is a prescription for endless trouble -- especially in its neoconservative variant. Unfortunately, the Obama administration is populated from top to bottom with liberal imperialists who remain committed to trying to govern the world, albeit with less emphasis on big-stick diplomacy and more emphasis on working with allies and international institutions.³²

Applied to the discursive meta-framework of U.S. grand strategy, Mearsheimer’s assessment of ‘neoconservatives’ and ‘liberal imperialists’ attests to the two discursive strands of hegemonic primacy and hegemonic engagement respectively. Their advocacy of an alternative ‘offshore balancing’ strategy places prominent realists like Mearsheimer, Walt and Layne firmly with the restraint discourse.

However, unlike other prominent and even more outspoken critics of American primacy such as Andrew Bacevich, Tom Engelhardt, or Chalmers Johnson they do not envision a grand strategy of holistic disengagement, or demilitarization. Instead, they recommend a managed ‘retrenchment’ of the United States from Europe, Asia and the Middle East, while maintaining capable military forces ‘over the horizon.’ Macdonald and Parent provide a definition that illustrates how restraint as a realist concept is primarily concerned with the preservation of U.S. power, while it simultaneously adapts to a relative decline of America’s global position:

We define ‘retrenchment’ as a policy of retracting grand strategic commitments in response to a decline in relative power. Abstractly, this means decreasing the overall costs of foreign policy by redistributing

³¹ Kaplan, “Why John J. Mearsheimer Is Right (About Some Things).”

³² Quoted in, *ibid.*

resources away from peripheral commitments and toward core commitments.³³

In the realist view of retrenchment, U.S. military forces are there to act as deterrent, and in last consequence as an intervening force should another actor try to establish a regional hegemony. Realism's focus on economic and especially military power as key determinant in international relations shapes the geopolitical imagination behind this grand strategy. Yet, their theory-based academic expertise also connects with the political-practical discourse in the United States. Arthur Krepinevich for example, president of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) think tank envisions a grand strategy that brings 'diminished resources' in line with 'realistic objectives.' He proposes a reorientation of the Pentagon clearly along the lines of offshore balancing and retrenchment.³⁴

All the while, it is made clear by realists that strategic reorientation and retrenchment is not meant as American disengagement. Mearsheimer and Walt both specifically distinguish offshore balancing, from 'isolationism,' explaining that:

Isolationists believe that there is no place outside of the Western Hemisphere to which it is worth deploying our troops. But offshore balancers believe there are three critical areas that no other hegemon should be allowed to dominate: Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Northeast Asia.³⁵

³³ Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011): p. 11.

³⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "Strategy in a Time of Austerity," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2012): pp. 58-69. Abandoning an earlier support for COIN, no longer seen as feasible due to its reliance on large numbers of ground forces, Krepinevich envisions a 'new strategic framework' that would account for continuing declining defense budgets and refocus the United States away from repelling territorial invasions to secure access to 'key regions and the global commons.' This 'strategy of 'assured access,' with its description of 'deterrence through denial' and 'deterrence through punishment,' essentially reformulates a grand strategy of hegemony through greater cooperation and restraint, stressing defensive over offensive elements, and air and sea power over ground troops. As such Krepinevich's 2012 article in *Foreign Affairs* reflects an ongoing debate in the Pentagon on the so-called Air-Sea battle concept, where the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force are represented as central actors for American power projection in the Asia-Pacific region, see Harry Kazianis, "Air-Sea Battle 2.0: A Global A2/AD Response," *The Diplomat*, November 14, 2013, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/air-sea-battle-2-0-a-global-a2ad-response/>.

³⁵ Quoted in Kaplan, "Why John J. Mearsheimer Is Right."

Offshore balancing is *not* isolationism, however, because the United States would still be diplomatically engaged in many places and committed to intervening in key areas if and when the balance of power broke down.³⁶

The power-centric analysis and geopolitical imagination that assigns regions of primary strategic concern to the United States documents how offshore balancing in fact represents a hybrid discourse of hegemonic restraint. Here, the military posture of the United States is reduced, but the determination to maintain its political control over geopolitical key areas of the globe remains unchanged.

While trying to avoid the isolationist label, a realist offshore balancing strategy contests the neoconservative vision of global primacy as well as liberal interventionist goals of humanitarian intervention.³⁷ As such, the interventions of the United States in World War 1 and 2 are seen as justified use of U.S. military power, - having prevented a German hegemony in Europe and Japanese domination over Asia, - but not the civil wars in Libya or Syria. Instead of acting as the ‘world’s policeman,’ the United States is to simply prevent any other actor of matching its own status as regional hegemon. This purely power calculated grand strategy vision does negate any special moral or ethical responsibility for the United States to act on behalf of the international system, the United Nations or international law. It formulates a decidedly materialist, anti-idealist vision of America’s role in the world. The grand strategy visions of neoconservative primacy, or liberal-internationalist ‘deep engagement,’ both draw heavily on the notion of America’s unique exceptionalist, liberal features to argue for its responsibility to lead. This lack of

³⁶ Walt, “Offshore balancing.”

³⁷ As Kaplan points out in his article, Mearsheimer, Walt and 31 other academics, many of them realists sponsored an ad in the *New York Times*, published on 26 October 2002, declaring that the Iraq War was not in America’s national interest. The invasion of Iraq was seen as ‘polar opposite’ of a grand strategy of offshore balancing; see Kaplan, “Why John J. Mearsheimer Is Right.”

idealism in the realist vision of offshore balancing might explain while it developed only limited political traction among Washington decision makers and pundits in in the past.³⁸

However, increasingly offshore balancing, or hegemonic restraint seems to have crossed over from an academic-centric discourse and point of debate among intellectuals to a wider sphere of popular and practical discussion. Walt for example points out how ideas of offshore balancing have informed a 2011 op-ed article by Thomas Friedman in the *New York Times*, supporting U.S. withdrawal from both Iraq and Afghanistan.³⁹ As documented in the following chapter, members of the Republican party's Tea Party wing and the libertarian Cato institute both promote visions of restraint that also reflect some of the realist arguments for offshore balancing. Finally, there also seems to be an intertextual connection to the Pentagon's 'Air-Sea Battle' concept and the 'pivot to Asia,' which deemphasize ground combat and forward deployment in favor of more indirect forms of American power projection.⁴⁰

Where offshore balancing is rooted in realist power calculations and confrontational scenarios of great power competition, engagement can be traced to the IR theory of liberal institutionalism and the tradition of Wilsonian idealism. Here, the focus lies on the cooperative potential of the international system, due to commonly shared

³⁸ Walt himself bemoans this lack of realist presence among policy-making circles and mainstream media, see Stephen Walt, "A bandwagon for offshore balancing?," *Foreign Policy*, December 1, 2011, accessed November 20, 2013, http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/01/a_bandwagon_for_offshore_balancing. On the ideological significance of liberalism and idealism for the foundation and development of U.S. grand strategy, see for example Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, pp. 118-132; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, pp. 21-26.

³⁹ Walt, "Offshore balancing."

⁴⁰ These measures include increased fleet visits, rotating military deployments for joint exercises, and the development of long-range air assets, cf., Singh, "Rebalancing the Maritime Pivot to Asia;" Jaffe, "U.S. model for a future war fans tensions with China and inside Pentagon."

norms and values and mutually beneficial institutional arrangements.⁴¹ Arguing from a liberal institutionalist perspective, John Ikenberry for example predicts that the liberal world order will endure even with a weakened United States.⁴² Here, the benefits of free trade, open sea-lanes, a rule-based system of international norms, institutions and organizations apply to all major and rising powers in the international system, and there is no competing ideology or alternative institutional design that could rival its prominence and advantages.⁴³

Ikenberry argues against primacy and the exclusive focus on unipolar stability theory underlying the hegemony discourse, and doubts the pessimist predictions from analysts such as Kagan or Kaplan for the negative effects of shifting power balances. In line with Zakaria, he stresses the rise of other states over the decline of the U.S., and emphasizes the opportunities of a post-American world. Thus, the United States should pursue a grand strategy of engagement, or ‘liberal order building’ that acknowledges shifting economic and political parameters in world politics, and seeks to maintain a cooperative management of the global institutional framework, while it simultaneously restores the standing of the U.S. as a global leader.⁴⁴ Here, the U.S. would ‘renegotiate the bargains and institutions of the past decades but retain its position as hegemonic leader.’⁴⁵ This grand strategy vision of hegemonic engagement Ikenberry sees as guiding principle behind the Obama administration.

⁴¹ As an exemplary overview, see Keohane, *After Hegemony*; Ikenberry, *After Victory*.

⁴² Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*.

⁴³ Ibid.; G. John Ikenberry, “The Future of the Liberal World Order,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): pp. 56-68.

⁴⁴ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, pp. 333-360.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 306.

A more fundamental shift to a grand strategy vision of engagement that deemphasizes the leadership role of the U.S. would alternatively lead to a ‘post-hegemonic,’ ‘post-American liberal order,’ where ‘the United States exercised less command and control of the rules and institutions.’⁴⁶ Instead, global leadership would be exercised through universal institutions and global collective action, between institutions such as the UN, and groups like the G-20 that combine established and rising powers, such as the U.S., the EU, China and India.⁴⁷ This falls more in line with similar recommendations for a geopolitical vision of partnership building from experts such as Brzezinski, Kissinger and Kupchan.⁴⁸

Engagement and its connection to liberal institutionalism is maybe the strongest intertextual link of IR theory-building and American grand strategy practice. The emphasis on engagement, cooperative multilateralism and the benefits of the liberal world order have long been hallmarks of the way the U.S. role in world politics is being described by Washington elites.⁴⁹ In fact, these themes have been reemphasized under the Obama administration.⁵⁰

However, this vision of engagement and cooperation is predominantly formulated from the assumption that the United States remains the indispensable leader in world affairs, rather than becoming just one of many network points in a multipolar system. Thus, it reflects a position of hegemonic engagement that actually reemphasizes the

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 302.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 303.

⁴⁸ Cf., Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*; Henry A. Kissinger, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (2012): pp. 44-53; cf., Kupchan, *No One’s World*.

⁴⁹ Cf., Ruggie, “Past as Prologue”, pp. 108-109; Bacevich, *Washington Rules*.

⁵⁰ Cf. David Sanger, “Pursuing Ambitious Global Goals, but Strategy is More,” *New York Times*, January 20, 2013, accessed November 14, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/21/us/politics/obamas-foreign-policy-goals-appear-more-modest.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&_.

standard representation of America's dominant role in world politics at the center of the liberal, international order.

The grand strategy debate in Foreign Affairs

On its website, *Foreign Affairs* represents its leading expert status as the defining feature of its intellectual reputation, placing it in a central position for the analysis of formal grand strategy discourse in the context of power/knowledge: "Since its founding in 1922, *Foreign Affairs* has been the leading forum for serious discussion of American foreign policy and global affairs."⁵¹ The journal is published by the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), which describes its position as:

(...) non-partisan, non-profit and nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to improving the understanding of U.S. foreign policy and international affairs through the free exchange of ideas.⁵²

For over 90 years, *Foreign Affairs* has generally been considered a prime expert publication on U.S. foreign policy, diplomatic relations and world politics. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* for example describes it as 'one of the most prestigious periodicals of its kind in the world.'⁵³ The journal does not only feature examples from academic research in IR, usually realist and liberal-institutionalist theory based expertise, but frequently represents the views and ideas of prominent political practitioners. Active and former Secretaries of State, Ambassadors, U.S. Senators and Generals are among those who regularly publish in this prestigious format of knowledge production and exchange.

⁵¹ "About Foreign Affairs," Foreign Affairs, accessed November 13, 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/about-us>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ "Foreign Affairs," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed November 13, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/213341/Foreign-Affairs>.

Within the genealogy of American grand strategy, this publication also holds special significance to ‘intellectuals of statecraft’ due to its historical legacy. It was in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, where the famous ‘Mr. X’ article was first published in 1947, which would spell out a grand strategy of ‘containment’ against the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ George F. Kennan, who was later revealed to be Mr. X, and had developed the article from his ‘Long Telegram,’ written as deputy chief of the U.S. mission in Moscow, is considered to be the embodiment of a grand strategist. His work is seen as the ideal example that any successful American grand strategy should aspire to be. As Michael Hirsh has remarked:

The diplomatic world keeps pining away for the next George Kennan, someone who might sum up the country’s overall mission in a strategic concept as simple as containment.⁵⁵

In the words of Kennan’s biographer, John Lewis Gaddis, the idea of containment:

(...) illuminated the path by which the international system found its way from the trajectory of self-destruction [...] to one that had, by the end of the second half, removed the danger of great-power war, revived democracy and capitalism, and thereby enhanced the prospects for liberty beyond what they ever before had been.⁵⁶

Remarkably, Kennan himself later denounced the militarization of American Cold War policies under containment, and the over-simplification of U.S. foreign and security policy into one central slogan. At a meeting in the White House in 1994 he

⁵⁴ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 26, no. 2 (1947): pp. 566-582 ; see also Nicholas Thompson, “Review Essay. Ideas Man,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2012): pp. 148-152; containment was translated into political practice by the Truman White House in 1950 through the National Security Council Report 68 (NCS-68), emphasizing military over diplomatic means in containing the Soviet Union, resulting, among other things, in the development of an American hydrogen bomb and the rearmament of West Germany. Kennan however argued that NSC-68 should not have been drafted at all, as it would make American policies too rigid, simplistic, and militaristic, cf., Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War: 1945–1996*, (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1997), p. 96. Kennan would later describe containment as a mistake, since a sole focus on the expansionist threat from the Soviet Union had led the U.S. into the quagmire of Vietnam and a heightened militarized confrontation of the Cold War. Kennan was also critical of American primacy after the end of the Cold War, declaring: “(...) this whole tendency to see ourselves as the center of political enlightenment and as teachers to a great part of the rest of the world strikes me as unthought-through, vainglorious and undesirable.” Quoted in, Richard Ullman “The U.S. and the World: An Interview with George Kennan,” *New York Review of Books*, August 12, 1999, accessed August 22, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1999/aug/12/the-us-and-the-world-an-interview-with-george-kennan/>.

⁵⁵ Michael Hirsh, “The Clinton Legacy,” *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2013): p. 89.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Thompson, p. 151.

apparently urged President Clinton to convey policy in a “thoughtful paragraph or more, rather than trying to come up with a bumper sticker.”⁵⁷

The almost mythical quality of the Mr. X. article and containment for the discourse of American grand strategy was remarkably reiterated when in 2009 a ‘Mr. Y’ article was published, titled “A new strategic narrative.” It was later revealed as the work of U.S. Navy Captain Wayne Porter and U.S. Marine Corps Colonel Mark “Puck” Mykleby, who invoked the image of Kennan to advocate a complete overhaul of strategic thinking in Washington.⁵⁸ The recantation of Kennan and the plea of Mr. Y however have done little to undermine the enthusiasm for grand strategy in academic circles in the United States, where under President Obama the adoration for Kennan and containment regularly usher in demands for a new ‘bumper sticker’ grand strategy.

Rethinking hegemony: The geopolitical imagination of global leadership

In *Foreign Affairs*, the dominant expert position on U.S. grand strategy by political scientists and practitioners reflects a strong bias towards a geopolitical vision of U.S. hegemony and global American leadership, based on the country’s superior economic and military power. Krepinevich for example directly relates the ‘global dominance’ of the United States to the country’s ‘overwhelming advantage in technology and resources,’ which gave the American military an unrivalled capacity

⁵⁷ Quoted in Meaney and Wertheim.

⁵⁸ Mr. Y, “A National Strategic Narrative,” Woodrow Wilson Center, 2011, accessed November 20, 2013, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/A National Strategic Narrative.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/A%20National%20Strategic%20Narrative.pdf). Mr. Y. called for a change of strategic perspective, replacing a narrow focus on national security and the countering of threats with a holistic and comprehensive vision of national sustainability and development, cf., *ibid*.

for global power projection.⁵⁹ The blow to U.S.-style laissez-faire capitalism through the global financial crisis is therefore firstly understood as a weakening of American power in the world, most notably vis-à-vis China, which is predicted to gain in global importance.⁶⁰ In this neo-realist zero-sum perspective of world politics, the diminished ability of the United States to provide global leadership, due to domestic concerns, from public indebtedness to growing inequality and mounting healthcare costs, is directly correlated with a rise in threat levels, from a possible ‘reversal of globalization’, to the ‘disintegration of Pakistan.’⁶¹

The German political commentator Josef Joffe in contrast doubts American decline and sees the United States as the essential ‘liberal empire’ necessary to underwrite global stability.⁶² This worldview, which equalizes U.S. hegemony, globalization and global security is deeply entrenched and widely shared. It informs a majority of the research and opinions in the widely cited *Foreign Affairs* articles, just as it underlies the premise of Hollywood blockbusters and the geopolitical analysis in major bestselling works, from *The World America Made* to the works by Friedman and Kaplan.⁶³ This intertextuality between research articles and popular books, and especially in different outlets by the same prominent authors, demonstrates the

⁵⁹ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., “The Pentagon’s Wasting Assets,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): pp. 18-33.

⁶⁰ Roger C. Altman, “A Geopolitical Setback for the West,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): pp. 2-14; Nancy Birdsall and Francis Fukuyama, “The Post-Washington Consensus,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 45-53. Arvind Subramanian, “The Inevitable Superpower,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): pp. 66-78.

⁶¹ Arvind Subramanian, “Globalization in Retreat,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): pp. 2-7. In the geopolitical analysis of Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini, the relative decline of the United States and the rise of China and others will lead to a non-polar future, a G-Zero, where no dominant actor or group of actors will be able to provide global leadership; Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini, “A G-Zero World,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 2-7. Others adopt the relative decline scenario, and an end of U.S. hegemony, to describe the new realities of a ‘post-American’ hemisphere in Latin America, or the ‘post-Washington’ consensus in economics, cf., Russell Crandall, “The Post-American Hemisphere,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): pp. 83-95.

⁶² Josef Joffe, “The Default Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): pp. 21-35.

⁶³ Kaplan for example identified the Indian Ocean in a *Foreign Affairs* article as ‘center stage’ for a new geopolitical antagonism between declining Western powers and the rising powers of China and India, the same argumentation he would present in greater detail in his *New York Times* bestseller *Revenge of Geography*, Robert Kaplan, “Center Stage for the Twenty-First Century,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): pp. 16-32.

blurring line between popular imagination and formal expertise in the construction of grand strategy discourses. Popularity and scientific reputation seem to reinforce each other in forwarding the status of certain ‘experts’ and their expertise on grand strategy and geopolitics.

Predominantly, this serves to further strengthen the hegemony consensus on U.S. grand strategy, which Posen defines as fundamental agreement over the ‘big picture’: “(...) the United States should dominate the world militarily, economically, and politically, [...] a strategy of liberal hegemony.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, the *Foreign Affairs* articles by Secretary of Defense Gates, Secretary of State Clinton, and other political and military officials, appearing in a major outlet of academic research and intellectual exchange, reveal the close intertextual link between formal expertise and the realm of policymaking. Here again, global leadership and military supremacy represent the centerpiece in the geopolitical imagination. In the words of then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates:

The United States is the strongest and greatest nation on earth (...). The power and global reach of its military have been an indispensable contributor to world peace and must remain so.⁶⁵

Hegemony is the lens through which these key officials of the Obama administration see the world and America’s role in it. At the same time, the attention given to the limits of American power, to ‘burden-sharing’ and ‘responsible stakeholders’ also demonstrates that the grand strategy discourse in the Obama White House has not simply reproduced the geopolitical imagination of the ‘unipolar moment’ and the

⁶⁴ Barry R. Posen, “Pull Back: The Case of a less Activist Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2013): p. 116.

⁶⁵ Robert M. Gates, “A Balanced Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): p. 39.

‘indispensable nation,’ which featured so prominently under the Clinton and Bush administrations.

In his 2010 *Foreign Affairs* article Robert Gates for example, referring to the new Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Review*, basically announced an end of large-scale ground operations and forced regime change as military tool of U.S. policy. The Iraq scenario had become a thing of the past. Instead the United States would focus on ‘building partner capacity,’ to enable other countries to provide for their own security, in order to save American treasury expenditure and the necessity for boots on the ground.⁶⁶ Providing this military assistance effectively and as part of a comprehensive approach was described as crucial tool to guarantee America’s ‘global leadership’ and ‘U.S. security.’⁶⁷

Yet from an American point of view these security partnerships and alliances are perceived as being executed under United States’ stewardship, rather than in full partnership with the United States. Published in the very same journal where the U.S. Secretary of Defense laid out his vision for cooperative security management, George Packard for example described how Gates demanded the implementation of an agreement about the Futema Air Base on Okinawa, rather than agreeing to renegotiate it, when a new Japanese government under Prime Minister Hatoyama

⁶⁶ Robert M. Gates, “Helping Others to defend Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): pp. 2-6. Lebanon, Pakistan, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia are named as examples for this kind of military assistance. Not surprisingly, all these countries are located with the ‘arch of instability’ where the Pentagon locates the challenges to U.S. national security on its geopolitical world map.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

came into office.⁶⁸ This episode illustrated how in political practice, engagement functions within the context of hegemony rather than as an alternative to it.

Echoing Gates, Hillary Clinton centered her 2010 *Foreign Affairs* article, where she argued for developing and strengthening the civilian power of the United States, on the problem of American leadership, and how to sustain it among a ‘crucible of challenges.’⁶⁹ As she explained in 2010: “My big-picture commitment is to restore American leadership (...).”⁷⁰ Clinton laid out a ‘smart power’ strategy, where development and diplomacy are strengthened and operate alongside defense as tools of American power and influence.⁷¹

As Brooks and Wohlforth have argued, the ‘unipolar moment’ as a strategic guideline for the George W. Bush Administration fueled ‘illusions of omnipotence’ about the global supremacy of the United States and its ability to dictate the political outcomes of military interventions.⁷² This is largely blamed on the neoconservative influence on U.S. foreign and security policy at the time, associated with names such as Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz and others, and their influence with key decision makers from President Bush to Vice-President Dick

⁶⁸ George R. Packard, “The United States-Japan Security Treaty at 50,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2010): pp. 92-103.

⁶⁹ Hillary Clinton, “Leading Through Civilian Power,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): pp. 13-24. Similar to the Pentagon’s Quadrennial Defense Review, Clinton launched a Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) for the State Department and U.S. AID, designed to ‘align its resources, policies, and strategies’. Mainly referring to this key strategy document of political-practical discourse, Clinton’s article in *Foreign Affairs* can be seen as the civilian counter-part to Gates’ military-centric perspective on national security and grand strategy. For both ‘American leadership’ represents the crucial geopolitical characteristic of the United States that must anchor any geopolitical vision.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Hirsh, p. 83.

⁷¹ These efforts, from disaster relief aid in Pakistan to American leadership in the Global Health Initiative are described as instruments of problem solving, capable to stabilize fragile states, advance human rights, and support America’s partners. As Clinton stresses, these efforts for regional and global stability ultimately serve to guarantee the interest and prosperity of the United States; cf., Clinton, “Leading Through Civilian Power.”

⁷² Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, “Reshaping the World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, Affairs 88, no. 2 (2009): pp. 49-63.

Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.⁷³ This ignores that the neoconservative agenda seems merely like a particularly military power focused and unilateral definition of the mainstream consensus on U.S. hegemony, or global leadership, which dominates in Washington DC. Only nuances separate Brooks, Wohlforth and Ikenberry from the neoconservative Kagan when they describe an alternative to American leadership as potentially catastrophic:

Where American leaders to choose retrenchment, they would in essence be running a massive experiment to test how the world would work without an engaged and liberal leading power. The results could well be disastrous.⁷⁴

From this neorealist-neoliberal perspective, 'deep engagement,' is an instrument for the better management of U.S. hegemony that ends the neoconservative squander of national resources and unnecessary wars of choice. It does not mean the advent of a post-American world, or a true multipolar international system. In the words of Melvyn Leffler:

The United States' quest for primacy, its desire to lead the world, its preference for an open door and free markets, its concern with military supremacy, its readiness to act unilaterally when deemed necessary, its eclectic merger of interests and values, its sense of indispensability all these remained, and remain, unchanged.⁷⁵

As such, neither the statements of Gates, nor those of Clinton, or Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth did represent cooperative engagement as a true novel alternative to existing American grand strategy thinking, where leadership would be executed globally, in an equal, balanced partnership with others. It merely served as a tool to maintain the political, military and economic preeminence of the United States.

⁷³ See also Max Boot, "Think Again: Neocons," *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2004, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/think-again-neocons/p7592>.

⁷⁴ Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, "Lean Forward," p. 142.

⁷⁵ Melvyn P. Leffler, "9/11 in Retrospect," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): p. 43.

The renewal of institutional relationships that Brooks and Wohlforth advocated in *Foreign Affairs* represented a clear continuity of a hierarchical structure in the international system meant to favor the geopolitical position of the United States over all others. This is also revealed in the way the United States is supposed to convince others of the benefits of its leadership: “What constitutes a public good is not always straightforward, so the United States needs to persuade others that what it is supplying is important.”⁷⁶

Here again the provision of ‘global goods’ or access to the ‘global commons’ is represented as hallmark of American leadership, and one of the key services the liberal hegemon supposedly offers to the states of the world. However, if these services were objective truths, it seems unclear why the United States would have to ‘persuade’ others of their value. It rather seems that the ‘global goods’ argument is a necessary trope within the U.S.-American context as justification for the global military presence and power projection capability of the United States, and thus is paramount to the geopolitical vision of hegemony.

The idea that the global commons could be managed jointly, as for example the international response to the piracy problem off the coasts of Somalia suggests, therefore does not enter the hegemony discourse. This absence of multipolarity mirrors its construction as the dangerous, volatile Other in Kagan’s unipolar argument for world order, or the neo-imperial fantasies of Kaplan and Friedman. In the discourse of hegemony, whether in its neoconservative, neorealist, or neoliberal version, the absence of ‘American leadership’ means geopolitical volatility and

⁷⁶ Brooks and Wohlforth, “Reshaping the World Order,” p. 60.

increased security risks, chaos and war, not a possibility for increased cooperation and collective security.

In addition, there remains a tendency within the Washington elite of foreign and security experts, to construct an ever-increasing plethora of existential threats to the United States, from failed states, to cyber warfare, global terrorism, rising powers, and regional instability.⁷⁷ As Zenko and Cohen have argued in their constructivist analysis of the construction of threat in the discourse of U.S. national security and foreign policy, the hyping of threat guarantees the massive infrastructure of the military-industrial and intelligence complexes with their substantial political and economic embeddedness.⁷⁸ The military-industrial-entertainment complex and the national security cinema function exemplary within this nexus of existential threat projections and Manichean narratives the discourse of hegemony employs.

Engagement between leadership and partnership

The existential necessity of threat discourses notwithstanding, the United States' 'unipolar moment' and an associated grand strategy of global primacy have come under scrutiny with many authors in *Foreign Affairs*, mostly due to the costly Iraq and Afghanistan experiences, and the mounting debt problem and economic difficulties of the United States perceived to persist at home. In response to these developments and the failure of neoconservative designs for regime change and regional transformation in the Middle East, alternative geopolitical visions were explored that sought to redefine America's leadership role toward a more

⁷⁷ Micah Zenko and Michael A. Cohen, "Clear and Present Safety," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 79-93.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

cooperative position in managing international relations and sustaining a liberal world order.⁷⁹

In 2009, Krepinevich for example argued for a reorientation of the Pentagon's military capabilities away from a focus on great power confrontation, towards counter-insurgency operations. At the same time he urged the United States 'to attract capable and willing allies.'⁸⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski remains the most outspoken advocate of a liberal vision of cooperative multilateralism. In his 2009 *Foreign Affairs* article he severely criticized the 'unilateralism' of the George W. Bush administration, and thus the vision of American unipolar primacy, and argued for a continued and even increased importance of the trans-Atlantic alliance.⁸¹ Within the engagement discourse, the grand strategy of President Obama regularly appeared as direct contradiction of the unipolar vision of its predecessor.

To Walter Russell Mead, a multilateral and liberal 'Wilsonian' vision informed the actions of the Obama administration, which he described as deliberate and calculated break with the unilateral and confrontational 'Jacksonianism' of President Bush.⁸² Brzezinski and Kupchan both characterized the foreign policy of President Obama as reversal of Bush, as the former was supposedly guided by a grand strategy of

⁷⁹ See for example on U.S. and Latin America: Abraham F. Lowenthal, "Obama and the Americas," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2010): pp. 110-124; on U.S. and China: Elizabeth C. Economy, "The Game Changer," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): pp. 142-152; Erica Downs and Suzanne Maloney, "Getting China to Sanction Iran," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 15-21; on U.S. and India: Sunil Sasgupta and Stephen P. Cohen, "Arms Sales for India," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 22-26.

⁸⁰ Krepinevich, "The Pentagon's Wasting Assets," p. 32.

⁸¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "An Agenda for NATO," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 5 (2009): pp. 2-20. Brzezinski describes NATO as core American-European partnership and possible hub for "(...) a globe-spanning web of various regional cooperative-security undertakings among states with the growing power to act," p. 20. This corresponds with the thoughts he would later formulate in *Strategic Vision* on the centrality of geopolitical partnerships for the United States with Europe, Russia and China. A similar argument is made in Charles A. Kupchan, "NATO's Final Frontier: Why Russia Should Join the Atlantic Alliance," *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 3 (2010): pp. 100-113.

⁸² Walter Russell Mead, "The Tea Party in American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 28-44.

engagement. The ‘reset’ of relationships with Russia, the administration’s efforts for nuclear disarmament, the President’s Cairo speech to the Muslim world, and renewed negotiations with Iran and North-Korea all served as references to testify to this new approach of multilateral cooperation under Obama.⁸³

Here, engagement represents a geostrategic alternative to hegemony rather than an auxiliary element that functions to continue America’s global primacy. On China, Henry Kissinger, like Brzezinski considered a doyen of grand strategy thinking and American geopolitics, similarly envisioned a relationship based on cooperative partnership. Arguing from a decidedly realpolitik balance-of-power perspective, and as prominent former practitioner, who facilitated the original rapprochement between the United States and the People’s Republic, he warned against a confrontational grand strategy towards China that would try to replicate containment, based on American tendency to over-emphasize ideological differences with non-democratic actors.⁸⁴ As such, he also criticized a hegemonic rhetoric in American politics, which defines China as ‘rising power’ with the need to ‘mature’ and behave ‘responsibly.’⁸⁵ Anne-Marie Slaughter, head of the U.S. State Department’s policy planning operation from 2009 until 2011, likewise envisioned the United States as a globalized networking power, concluding that:

⁸³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “From Hope to Audacity,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2010): pp.16-30; Charles A. Kupchan, “Enemies Into Friends,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2010): pp. 120-135. See also, Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal and Michael O’Hanlon, “Scoring Obama’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 3 (2012): pp. 29-43.

⁸⁴ Kissinger, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations,” pp. 44-53.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54. A charge that as Kissinger points out seems particular America-centric and omits the almost two thousand years of consecutive historical experience that China claims as a state and influential great power in Asia.

In the twenty-first century, the United States' exceptional capacity for connection, rather than splendid isolation or hegemonic domination, will renew its power and restore its global purpose.’⁸⁶

Again, engagement appears as a distinctive alternative in defining the United States' role in the world. In a similar vein, Joseph Nye Jr., who coined the term 'soft power,' demanded a new narrative to replace the 'American century' and 'American primacy,' arguing that the United States must develop a 'smart power' strategy, a term Secretary Clinton adopted for her civilian power concept, combining military and economic assets with the attractiveness of its culture and values in order to 'exercise power with others as much as power over others.'⁸⁷ Finally, Leslie Gelb concluded that a U.S. foreign policy based in 'common sense' must acknowledge that:

(...) mutual indispensability is the fundamental operating principle for power in the twenty-first century meaning that the United States is the indispensable leader but needs equally indispensable partners to succeed.’⁸⁸

However, as Gelb demonstrates, there remains an irresolvable contradictory tension in geopolitical representations between grand strategy discourses of hegemony and engagement, where the singularity of American leadership cannot be reconciled with a notion of equivalence towards other powers. While Gelb for example, seemingly endorses a vision of engagement as cooperative partnership, he is convinced that only the United States, 'alone among nations can provide the leadership to solve the problems that will otherwise engulf the world.'⁸⁹ Nye likewise sees his smart power strategy as a way to avoid American decline. Although he distinguishes between absolute American decline as 'decay', and relative decline, he does not seem to be

⁸⁶ Anne-Marie Slaughter, "America's Edge," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): p. 113.

⁸⁷ Joseph Nye Jr., "The Future of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): pp. 2-12.

⁸⁸ Gelb, "Necessity, Choice, and Common Sense," p. 71.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

willing to accept a multipolar international system, or a post-American future where the United States is reduced to the status of *primus inter pares*.⁹⁰

American decline, 'becoming just another great power' in the words of Gelb, would mean that the identity of the United States as a global superpower would be lost. America would become 'a nation barely worth fearing or following.'⁹¹ This representation of the United States as a country, which can only have a meaningful existence in world affairs as long as its superior power can elevate it above its allies and in its enemies alike, reveals the hegemonic imagination behind much of the engagement argument.

Many experts have denounced the 'unilateralism', or 'hubris' of the Bush administration, and the neo-conservative 'Vulcans,' and their imperial delusions of American primacy.⁹² Yet it often seems that their idea of engagement only served to realize the established hegemony of the United States in a more cost-effective and cooperative fashion, not to fundamentally redefine America's role in world politics.⁹³ The mantra of America's global leadership remains sacrosanct and continues to dominate the geopolitical imagination in the majority of academic discourse.

Even a modest American decline, as implied in the post-American scenario, was therefore deemed unacceptable by many prominent grand strategy experts. In their perception, decline and the future outcome of world politics remain almost

⁹⁰ See Nye, "The Future of American Power."

⁹¹ Gelb, "Necessity, Choice, and Common Sense", p. 71.

⁹² Cf., James Mann and Jim Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The history of Bush's war cabinet* (London: Penguin, 2004).

⁹³ On the continuity of grand strategy thinking from Bush to Obama, see Leffer, "9/11 in Retrospect."

exclusively dependent on American agency and willpower. This dominant view of the United States as a uniquely capable superpower is intractably tied to the formal discourse of grand strategy in the United States. A geopolitical vision of hegemony represents a consensus shared by neoconservative, unilateral primacists and liberal, multilateral institutionalists.

The result is a hybrid discourse of grand strategy as hegemonic engagement, where the United States remains the dominant superpower charged with global leadership, but where the unilateralism of the neoconservative vision of primacy is replaced with a method of multilateral cooperation. A more fundamental reformulation of American grand strategy towards a vision of cooperative engagement, as implied for example by Brzezinski or Slaughter would therefore have to readjust this dominant representation of the United States in world politics. Rather than emphasizing the role as ‘sole leader,’ a representation as ‘indispensable partner’ seems more in line with a geopolitical vision of engagement, if understood as leadership in partnership among equals within a network-based international system.

Leading from behind – The American superpower under restraint

Compared to the numerous proponents of hegemony and engagement, only a small minority of experts recommended a clear course of self-limitation and pure military self-defense as an inherently better way for the United States to pursue its national interests. Here, avoiding costly experiments in forced democracy export, cutting the defense budget, and doing away with the necessity for a global military presence of

permanent bases was not only seen as the economically sounder option but also the more sustainable path in security terms.⁹⁴

Joseph Parent and Paul MacDonald for example have argued that a grand strategy of ‘prudent retrenchment,’ could reduce the exposure of the United States to ‘potential flashpoints,’ encourage U.S. allies to provide more for common defense, and reduce enmity toward America. However, they conceded that such a course of action would run directly counter against the prevailing consensus on U.S. hegemony, where a maximum of global military power is equaled with a maximum of national security for the United States.⁹⁵ Against this entrenched and institutionalized inertia, they saw presidential leadership as an essential motor for change.⁹⁶

This elite consensus however was strongly reconfirmed by the then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy, who also co-founded the influential Centre for a New American Security think tank, and the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Plans Janine Davidson. Specifically formulated against a ‘misguided’ notion of retrenchment they advocated a policy of ‘forward deployment,’ citing the standard list of America’s key features of economic and military power and the country’s resulting special responsibility for global leadership.

⁹⁴ See William Pfaff, “Manufacturing Insecurity,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): pp. 133-14; Joseph M. Parent and Paul K. MacDonald, “The Wisdom of Retrenchment,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2011): pp. 32-47; Posen, “Pull Back.”

⁹⁵ Parent and MacDonald, “The Wisdom of Retrenchment,” p. 33.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

The focus was again on the adjustment of U.S. hegemony, while simultaneously preserving its continuity among changing geopolitical parameters.⁹⁷ Here, it is the deterrence of potential regional adversaries through the presence of U.S. troops in Asia, Europe and the Middle East that is essential for U.S. national security. It is noteworthy that the article's detailed description of measures under the 'pivot to Asia' that President Obama announced in January 2012 did not mention any cooperative measures with China, although the geopolitical realignment of the United States to the Asia-Pacific was supposedly not meant to contain the People's Republic.⁹⁸

In China however, it seems that these assurances were not given much credit, and the United States was in turn perceived as a revisionist power, motivated to halt, or at least delay China's rise.⁹⁹ As Nathan and Scobell pointed out: China has taken a special place in the American threat perception, seen as the only actor that could represent a credible challenge to U.S. hegemony by a competing great power.¹⁰⁰

This characterization of China as potentially expansionist and aggressive power that needed to be deterred and possibly contained also seems to drive the so called Air-Sea battle concept by the Pentagon, which seeks to maintain the U.S. military's supremacy in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰¹ The confrontational representation of China and the military response under the pivot indeed seem to be at odds with a vision of

⁹⁷ Michèle Flournoy and Janine Davidson, "Obama's New Global Posture," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 4 (2012): pp. 54-63.

⁹⁸ This list includes the U.S. security alliances with Japan and South-Korea, the deployment of U.S. Marines to Australia, the stationing of two littoral combat ships in Singapore, and increased military cooperation with Vietnam, Thailand, India, or the Philippines, *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹⁹ Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "How China Sees America," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 5 (2012): pp. 32-47; see also Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy* (New York and London: 2011, Norton).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Cf., J. Randy Forbes, "America's Pacific Air-Sea Battle Vision," *The Diplomat*, March 8, 2012, accessed November 20, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/03/americas-pacific-air-sea-battle-vision/>.

geopolitical partnership, as proposed for example by Kissinger or Brzezinski.¹⁰²

Indeed they run counter to it, as Ross suggested:

(...) the administration has also reversed Washington's longstanding policy of engagement with Beijing, turning instead to costly initiatives whose forces is disproportionate to the threat from China.

Several authors in *Foreign Affairs* have subsequently struggled to reconcile a policy of cooperative engagement and military preeminence of the U.S. vis-à-vis China.¹⁰³

As is the case with the Asian pivot, the emphasis by the defense experts Flournoy and Davidson on 'burden sharing,' global engagement and rebalancing ultimately served argumentatively to sustain the global military supremacy of the United States and its worldwide distribution of forces. As such, it is as a perfect example for the prevalence of U.S. hegemony in the political-practical discourse of grand strategy, especially in the Pentagon and its hostility toward a more radical reformulation of America's role in world politics. A continuity that is well documented in the popular geopolitical imagination of military supremacy the Department of Defense sponsors through its Hollywood liaison.

Directly contrary to the hopes of Parent and Macdonald to act for Obama as an agent of change, Flournoy and Davidson called on the U.S. President to largely maintain the status quo: "(...) the president must resist calls for retrenchment and continue to champion the United States' unique and leadership role in the world."¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, the meandering representation of China in the American geopolitical imagination,

¹⁰² See also Robert S. Ross, "The Problem with the Pivot," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2012): pp. 70-82.

¹⁰³ Cf., Mark Leonard, "Why Convergence Breeds Conflict," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2013): pp.125-135; Avery Goldstein, "China's Real and Present Danger," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2013): pp. 136-144; James Steinberg and Michael O'Hanlon, "Keep Hope Alive," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2014): pp. 107-117.

¹⁰⁴ Flournoy and Davidson, p. 63.

between potential threat and possible partner demonstrated the frequent fluctuating between hegemony and engagement in the grand strategy discourse under Obama. On China, the United States remains ‘two-faced.’¹⁰⁵

The hegemony discourse is fundamentally tied to the imagination of the U.S. as a superpower and global leader facing multiple and serious dangers to its security. The grand strategy discourse of restraint relies in turn on a geopolitical representation of the world, where a smaller role of the United States, and especially less U.S. military power does not equal a rise in existential threat to the country. In the words of Zenko and Cohen: “In an era of relative peace and security, the U.S. military should not be the primary prism through which the country sees the world.”¹⁰⁶ In fact, the restraint discourse argues that a more limited international role and military power would likely make the United States safer. Concluding his critical appraisal of the Asian pivot, Ross stated: “As China rises, a policy of restraint rather than alarmism, will best serve U.S. national security.”¹⁰⁷ This argument for a less threat centered and military primacy focused grand strategy connects intertextually directly with the arguments popularized for example by Andre Bacevich or Rachel Maddow in their respective bestsellers that call for American restraint and strategic reorientation.

Michael Mandelbaum’s critical review essay in *Foreign Affairs* of three books that all argue for less American commitment and military involvement in world affairs questioned this argument. He doubted that other governments would compensate the loss of American power. As a result of restraint Mandelbaum, a supporter of

¹⁰⁵ Nathan and Scobell, p. 36.

¹⁰⁶ Zenko and Cohen, p. 93.

¹⁰⁷ Ross, p. 82.

American hegemony, argued that: “(...) the world is all too likely to become both more disorderly and less prosperous.”¹⁰⁸ While conceding that retrenchment and restraint would dominate American foreign and security policy in far greater detail than in the past, this was the result of economic realities that would diminish the material base of U.S. power projection capabilities: “The principal cause will be the fiscal condition of the United States.”¹⁰⁹ Restraint, in others words, was not due to a new geopolitical vision of prudence and caution that had taken root among the Washington elite, but because the American superpower had run out of money.

Even the well-argued and detailed grand strategy program of Parent and Macdonald to align the economic and military resources of the United States with a perceived slow and relative decline remained committed to the central idea of U.S. leadership, and how to renew its legitimacy.¹¹⁰ Similar to the hegemonic engagement discourse, in much of the restraint discourse the key representation of geopolitical identity of the United States was the idea of America as leader. For Zemko and Cohen it serves as key feature in the geopolitical imagination of the United States: “American leadership must be commensurate with U.S. interests and nature of the challenges facing the country.”¹¹¹

Much of the restraint discourse tries to reconcile a reduction and reorientation of American power with an elevated role of the United States in world affairs. Thus, we encounter another hybrid discourse of hegemonic restraint; or what would become

¹⁰⁸ Michael Mandelbaum, “Review Essay. Overpowered?,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): pp. 114-119. For a more detailed account of Mandelbaum’s argument, see Michael Mandelbaum, *The Frugal Superpower* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

known in the Libya intervention as ‘leading from behind.’¹¹² However, as with the paring of hegemony and engagement, the reformulation of grand strategy practice without a more fundamental reassessment and reframing of American geopolitical identity seems to run counter to the dominant rationalist understanding of grand strategy. It did not holistically provide a coherent vision in a strategic context. Instead, it produced somewhat of a mismatch between the self-identification of the country and the political-strategic course of actions it was supposed to follow.

This tension between contradictory geopolitical representations in the expert discourse of American grand strategy, between hegemony, engagement and restraint, unipolarity and decline, superpower status and post-American world, reveals that far from ideal type cases, there exist many hyphenated forms of grand strategy visions. Elements of two or even three distinctive basic discourses can enter the formulation of geopolitical imagination and political practice in parallel and contend with each other.

Daniel Drezner developed a similar argumentation, when his 2011 article in *Foreign Affairs* characterized two grand strategies of the Obama administration: First, ‘multilateral retrenchment,’ well articulated but unsuccessful, and then a more assertive ‘counter-punching,’ seen as poorly articulated but performing better.¹¹³ Here, a prominent expert analysis on U.S. grand strategy indicated that ideas of engagement, restraint, and hegemony simultaneously influence geopolitical thinking

¹¹² The phrase ‘leading from behind’ was used by an unnamed official in the Obama administration to characterize the U.S. approach towards the Libya intervention, where the United States undertook the first wave of attacks and then transferred responsibility for the mission to NATO and especially the UK and France, see Ryan Lizza, “Leading from Behind,” *The New Yorker*, April 27, 2011, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/04/leading-from-behind-obama-clinton.html>.

¹¹³ Drezner, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy.”

and strategic practice under President Obama. There is not one single dominant geopolitical vision: “The tone has been neither that of American triumphalism and exceptionalism nor one of American decline.”¹¹⁴

As Drezner pointed out, the result can be that grand strategy seems ‘poorly articulated’ and does not meet the expectations for delivering a convincing rationale for the administration’s behavior.¹¹⁵ For Indyk, Lieberthal and O’Hanlon from the Washington based Brookings Institution, Obama in his first term, has not yet ‘developed a clear strategy’ for the readjustment of America’s role in a changing global order.¹¹⁶ However, such assessments are based on the rationalist-positivist interpretation of grand strategy dominant in mainstream IR in the United States, which demands that simplicity and reductionist logic are imposed over the complexity of world politics through stringent narratives and coherent equations of means and ends. These self-declared acolytes of Kennan, fixated on the legacy of containment, are mostly unable to allow for complexity, nuance and multidimensionality in the analysis of grand strategy.

Conclusion

From an analysis of the debate in *Foreign Affairs* it is apparent that the expert discourse on American grand strategy under Obama has been dominated by a discussion of America’s global leadership, and the necessary conditions to sustain it among shifting geopolitical and domestic parameters. This corresponds with the

¹¹⁴ Indyk, Lieberthal, and O’Hanlon, p. 31.

¹¹⁵ Drezner, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy,” p. 58.

¹¹⁶ Indyk, Lieberthal, and O’Hanlon, p. 42.

dominant position of U.S. hegemony in the common sense realm of cinematic imagination, where America's military heroes have to save the world on a regular basis, as well as with the majority of bestselling books on national security and geopolitics that envisioned the United States as the indispensable center of world politics.

From the analysis of expert discourse provided here, it seems that within the context of IR meta-theory the main competition for scientifically informing American grand strategy remains a contest of liberal-institutionalism versus neorealism, between engagement and offshore balancing, each seeking to reframe American hegemony for the future, not to replace it with an altogether different geopolitical vision. This intellectual exchange on the appropriate management of U.S. hegemony and world order continues an academic debate between realists and liberals that has dominated the field of International Relations and the political imagination of foreign affairs since its inception. And while engagement may have had a greater impact on political rhetoric so far, it seems that the realist argument for retrenchment has gained prominence.

However, so far neither perspective appears to have been altogether dominant in shaping strategic thinking under the Obama administration, frustrating academic preferences for clear rationalist explanatory models and coherent arguments. The academic discourse has also largely failed to deliver a more holistic and comprehensive reformulation of American grand strategy that not only suggests political-practical course corrections, but a more fundamental and deep reaching reorientation of geopolitical identity of the United States as a whole.

As such, in largely staying with the status quo definition of America's role in the world and the prevailing hegemony consensus, both realism and liberal institutionalism are in fact far closer to each other than their obvious differences in theoretical dispositions on strategic expertise would let the causal observer believe. Considering the majority of mainstream academic expertise, it seems that hegemony is still the only game in town.

From a close textual analysis of expert discourse and its production of dominant knowledge in IR it becomes clear that the positivist-rationalist expectations for the formulation of grand strategy as coherent, consistent world view, aligning resources and goals in a logical chain of means and ends are not being fulfilled. By focusing on the function of discourse in producing the knowledge of grand strategy, and the key component of identity, this chapter has revealed that dominant visions of America's role and position in the world, discussed at the center of IR expertise, have produced a mismatch between representations of identity and political practice, simultaneously operating with contradictory representations of leadership and partnership on the one hand, and leadership and restraint on the other hand.

This has produced hybrid grand strategy discourses of hegemonic engagement, described as 'deep engagement' or 'hegemonic liberal order', and hegemonic restraint, or 'offshore balancing.' While still assuming America's global leadership as key feature of world politics the practical recommendations for partnership building and burden sharing, or geopolitical retrenchment and military downsizing run counter to the hegemonic imagination of the United States as dominant economic and military superpower, American exceptionalism, and the special responsibility of

the United States for maintaining world order. At the same time, the continued reliance on this hegemonic representation of the United States stands in the way of a more fundamental geopolitical reorientation of the country, either as prominent node in a global network of equally responsible, cooperative partners, or a more limited, globally less exposed power that is focused on domestic renewal and military self-defense.

This production of mixed messages concerning U.S. grand strategy seems to animate the criticism of experts concerning the unclear geostrategic positioning of the Obama administration. Their own formal expertise however, contributes to exactly this state of affairs. The contradictory impulses in U.S. grand strategy discourse do not signal the absence of strategic thinking under the Obama administration then. Instead, they reveal the existence of a fixed matrix of ideas, which operate in constant competition with each other in trying to shape the geopolitical imagination. It is this synchronicity and tension that marks contemporary U.S. grand strategy discourses. This follows from the logic of grand strategy as power/knowledge and the way power operates across and within discourses. As Foucault has remarked “(...) there can exist different and contradictory discourses within the same strategy (...)”¹¹⁷ The formal discourse of U.S. grand strategy in IR remarkably demonstrates this fluidity and multiplicity of the geopolitical imagination during the Obama administration.

¹¹⁷ Quoted in Edkins, *Poststructuralism & international relations*, p. 54.

5. The Washington consensus: Think tanks, national security experts and American grand strategy in the public policy debate

One striking feature of foreign policy discussions in the United States is the widespread assumption that this country is the ‘indispensable nation’ in the international system.¹ – Ted Galen Carpenter

America’s preferred role in the world, the pursuit of the national interest, and the appropriate use of U.S. power are the themes that animate the public policy debate on grand strategy. Here, think tanks form a ‘specialized community of security intellectuals’ that analyze, comment and recommend strategy, in order to ‘help policy makers see how the pieces fit together.’² Their aim is to formulate a course that ‘over several decades and multiple administrations’ can align means and ends, domestic and foreign policies, and global and regional issues, to bring about a world ‘that is most conducive to American interests.’³ Unlike IR scholars with a predominantly academic interest in debate and intellectual exchange, their formal research and advice is decidedly policy oriented, motivated by the ambition to ‘capture the political imagination’ of policy makers and the public.⁴

In the previous chapter, the critical analysis of the expert debate in *Foreign Affairs* has revealed how the paradigm of American leadership constitutes the key element of geopolitical imagination within formal grand strategy discourse. The hegemonic identity of the United States represents a discursive fixture that supersedes the meta-theoretical divide among neoliberal and neorealist IR scholars and overlays concepts

¹ Ted Galen Carpenter, “Delusions of Indispensability,” *The National Interest*, no. 124 (March/April 2013): p. 47.

² Ó Tuathail and Agnew, “Geopolitics and discourse”, p. 193; Richard Fontaine and Kirstin M. Lord, “Introduction: Debating America’s Future,” in *America’s Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, p. 6.

³ Brimley and Flournoy, “Introduction,” in *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, p. 6.

⁴ Cf., Diane Stone, *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think tanks and the policy process* (New York: Psychology Press, 1996). Stone defines think tanks as epistemic communities, ‘made up of a network of specialists [...] who share a common worldview and seek to translate their beliefs into public policies and programs;’ *ibid.*, p. 3.

of restraint and engagement among policymakers and strategy experts, such as ‘deep engagement,’ or ‘offshore balancing.’ Thus, hegemony, as the dominant representation of a leading role of the United States in the international system, based on superior economic and military power becomes an institutionalized grand strategy discourse. It is co-produced as expert knowledge through the authoritative voice of academic research, and the reputation for excellence and influence, associated with a publication such as *Foreign Affairs* as an elite medium of intellectual exchange.

This chapter will now build on this investigation of expert discourse, and analyze the work of several influential think tanks in the United States, thus further examining the formulation of grand strategy discourses as expert knowledge, and in particular how research expertise is applied to practical issues of national security and foreign policy. The think tank scene is a fixture of political life in Washington and central element in policy debates surrounding a wide range of topics from economics and health care to foreign policy and national security. The individual think tanks, set up as independent, non-profit organizations for political research, analysis and advice, offer professional expertise in a wide range of formats: They publish books, research papers, policy briefs, media articles and press releases, organize workshops, talks and conferences, provide policy experts for media enquiries or Congressional hearings, and engage in professional networking with government, businesses and political parties. Some think tanks are decidedly bi-partisan organizations, others pursue a clear ideological agenda. Their common goal however, is to influence policymakers, to inform the public debate, and to have an impact on the political

agenda setting in Washington.⁵ As James McGann put it in his study on think tanks and policy advice in the U.S., their primary function is to: “(...) help government understand and make informed choices about issues of domestic and international concern (...).”⁶ In this role they identify, articulate and promote policy issues, build networks, provide personnel and function as forums of intellectual exchange.

Stuart Croft has remarked that think tanks are: “(...) repositories of self-defined knowledge, [...] and that knowledge is framed by particular political and thereby discursive practices.”⁷ The majority of leading think tanks in Washington adheres to the central paradigm of American hegemony and the indispensability of a leading U.S. role in world politics in their research. This has considerable practical policy implications for the formulation of U.S. grand strategy and the question of continuity and change in the way the United States organizes its national security and foreign policy.⁸ This ‘Washington consensus’ of policy research and analysis further anchors and solidifies the geopolitical imagination of military preeminence and global leadership that the thesis has previously identified in the realm of popular imagination and formal expertise, and embeds it firmly at the heart of political discourse.

⁵ For an in-depth analysis of the role of think tanks and policy experts in American public policy, see in particular Stone, *Capturing the Political Imagination* and Andrew Rich, *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004),

⁶ James G. McGann, *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the U.S.* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2005), p. 3.

⁷ Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*, p. 235

⁸ See in this context also Michael J. Mazarr, “The Risks of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency,” *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): pp. 7-22. Mazarr refers to the ‘consensus of conventional wisdom’ on U.S. grand strategy as an impediment for envisioning and enacting change in policy; Carpenter likewise observes that ‘only a handful iconoclasts in the foreign-policy community’ would dare to question the ‘conventional wisdom’ that the United States is and must be the ‘indispensable nation’ in the international system, Carpenter, “Delusions of Indispensability”, p. 47.

Critically investigating the intellectual output and research produced by this elite network that forms an integral part of the American foreign policy establishment reveals that the Washington think tank scene, for the most part, does not actually engage in an open-ended debate about American grand strategy, or a true exchange of ideas regarding what the role of the U.S. in the world should be. Despite the numerous self-descriptions as impartial, neutral, or bi-partisan, and the supposedly strict adherence to scientific rationality and pragmatism in formulating their policy advice, the expert discourse on grand strategy largely takes place within a black box of limited imagination and acceptable mainstream opinion.

From the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, to the bi-partisan think tanks of the Brookings Institution and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, to the Center for a New American Security, and the progressive Center for American Progress, the necessity and desirability of American leadership in world affairs is not in question. Rather than discussing alternatives of grand strategy, there is a limited debate about the better management of U.S. hegemony. This becomes remarkably obvious, when the one true outlier to this consensus, the libertarian Cato Institute and its preference for a grand strategy of restraint and retrenchment, gets branded as 'isolationist,' and thus put outside the boundaries of acceptable policy discourse. Thus, the Washington think tank scene appears less as forum for the open exchange of ideas, and more like an element of the military-intellectual-complex that co-produces the geopolitical imagination of political leadership and military preeminence as expert knowledge; similar in the way the military-entertainment-

industry liaison produces this vision as product of popular culture and common sense reference.⁹

An important element of the political role of think tanks is the ‘rotating door’ principle. Part of the policy impact of think tanks stems from the fact that their individual experts have spent time as part of a presidential administration, offering valuable personal connections and practical experience, or will re-enter government at a later point, which allows them to transfer their knowledge and research expertise into their government functions. As Shawn Brimley, currently executive vice president and director of studies at the influential Centre for a New American Security, and former member of the National Security Council staff in the Obama White House has pointed out in an interview with the author: There is no single agency, or central, bureaucratic planning process politically responsible for grand strategy in Washington. Frequently however, individuals use their position in a think tank to develop ideas and engage in strategic thinking, and then try to translate their expertise into actual policies, when they hold government offices.¹⁰

Methodologically, this chapter will concentrate on the work on foreign policy and national security of several high-ranking think tanks. These think tanks have been selected to provide the greatest possible range of political views on grand strategy.

⁹ In this context it is noteworthy that U.S. weapons manufacturers, such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin, or Raytheon also count among the major donors of several influential think tanks investigated here, such as CNAS or CSIS, cf. Bryan Bender, “Many D.C. think tanks now players in partisan wars,” *The Boston Globe*, August 11, 2013, accessed April 11, 2014, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2013/08/10/brain-trust-for-sale-the-growing-footprint-washington-think-tank-industrial-complex/7ZifHfrLPlbz0bSeVOZHdI/story.html>; Christopher A. Preble, “The Revolving Door, Think Tanks and the MIC,” *The National Interest*, December 29, 2010, accessed April 11, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/the-revolving-door-think-tanks-the-mic-4646>.

¹⁰ Shawn Brimley, interview by Georg Löffmann, June 15, 2013.

At the same time, they are considered to have the greatest impact on public policy.¹¹ From the *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice*, six think tanks have been selected, each one is considered to be the top listed think tank in the respective category of conservative, libertarian, centrist and progressive, pertaining to their basic political orientation and ideological foundation.¹² In the centrist category there is a further sub-division of center-right, centrist and center-left.

Fig. 16 List of Think Tanks

American Enterprise Institute (AEI)	No. 7	Conservative
Cato Institute	No. 10	Libertarian
Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)	No. 4	Center-Right
Council on Foreign Relations (CFR)	No. 3	Centrist
Brookings Institution	No. 1	Center-Left
Center for American Progress (CAP)	No. 11	Progressive

In addition, the Center for a New American Security has been selected for study in this chapter.¹³ CNAS has enjoyed a particular close connection to the Obama administration. Several leading members of this think tank have occupied high-ranking policy positions for diplomacy and defense in the first Obama administration, and frequently media reports have remarked on CNAS's influential position on policy making.¹⁴

¹¹ The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the University of Pennsylvania ranks the top 55 think tanks in the United States based on an annual global peer and expert survey of over 1950 scholars, policymakers, journalists, and regional and subject area experts. As the report states: "The Rankings' primary objective is to recognize some of the world's leading public policy think tanks and highlight the notable contributions these institutions are making to governments and civil societies worldwide." James McGann, *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012), p. 11.

¹² Cf., McGann, *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the U.S.*, p. 11-13; see also, Rich, pp. 18-20.

¹³ Although a relatively new think tank with just 30 employees, and only operating since 2007, it is considered one of the top ranking think tanks in the United States, specifically dealing with issues of national security (no. 14).

¹⁴ See for example, Yochi J. Draezen, "Obama Dips Into Think Tank for Talent," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 17, 2008, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB122688537606232319>; Carlos Lozada, "Setting Priorities for the Afghan War," *The Washington Post*, June 7, 2009, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060501967.html>.

Together these think tanks, covering a wide range of political perspectives and ideological convictions have developed a significant body of work on U.S. national security and foreign policy, and continue to centrally inform and influence the political debate in Washington. In its analysis the thesis will concentrate on two policy issues in particular that were prominent in the expert debate about the future role of the United States in world politics: sequestration and the Asian pivot. These two issues were of special significance not only because they occupied a central place in the context of national security and foreign policy under President Obama, but also because they were consistently framed as fundamental long-term challenges to the global role of the United States and the definition of its overarching grand strategy for the 21st century.¹⁵ As the chapter will demonstrate, far from a clash of ideas about America's role in the world, the majority of think tanks agree on a fundamental truth about the country's indispensable leadership, perpetuating not challenging conventional wisdom, and co-producing it as expert knowledge and pragmatic policy advice.

Examining the policy research and expertise of these leading think tanks further underlines the centrality of the geopolitical imagination of global leadership in the formal discourse of grand strategy that had already emerged from the pages of *Foreign Affairs* and the mainstream discourse of IR scholarship. At the same time its central position among policy experts corresponds with its dominant presence in popular culture and common sense knowledge, and further reveals how the

¹⁵ In a study on U.S. force structure in Asia for the Pentagon, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) for example concluded that: "The repositioning of forces in the region has strategic consequences that will shape the trajectory of the next three decades." Center for Strategic and International Studies, *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012), p. 3.

intertextual production and co-constitution of geopolitical imagination establishes discourses of grand strategy as firmly entrenched worldview.

Budget hawks versus defense hawks: Grand strategy under sequestration and the debate on the Right

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI), founded in 1943, is a leading conservative think tank with close links to the Republican Party. AEI enjoyed special prominence under the George W. Bush administration, where several of its members occupied important positions.¹⁶ In 2003, commemorating the prominent neoconservative and AEI senior fellow Irving Kristol, President Bush commended the institute for having ‘some of the finest minds in our nation.’ He added that: “You do such good work that my administration has borrowed 20 such minds.”¹⁷

This political and ideological proximity to the Republican Party continued under the Obama administration, manifest for example when AEI along with the Heritage Foundation co-hosted the Republican primary debate on national security on 22 November 2011. Republican Representative and vice-presidential candidate of 2012, Paul Ryan called the think tank ‘one of the beachheads of the modern conservative movement.’¹⁸ AEI also continues to be an intellectual home for several prominent neoconservatives, such as Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, or Richard Perle, which were all signatories of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) that was

¹⁶ These include: John R. Bolton, Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs (2001–2005) and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (2005–2006); Richard Perle, Chairman of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee (2001–2003); Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense (2001–2005) and 10th President of the World Bank (2005–2007), and John Yoo, Deputy Assistant Attorney General (2001–2003).

¹⁷ Quoted in Michael Flynn, “The War Hawks,” *The Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 2003, accessed January 21, 2013, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-04-13/news/0304130427_1_iraq-william-kristol-benevolent-hegemony.

¹⁸ American Enterprise Institute, *Annual Report* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2012), 12.

closely associated with AEI and strongly advocated a grand strategy of American primacy.¹⁹

Central to this geopolitical vision of ‘benevolent global hegemony’ and ‘strategic and ideological predominance’ is the emphasis of a unipolar world order, with the United States as its undisputed leader, outspoken support for large defense budgets to perpetuate America’s technological and military supremacy, a distrust of international organizations and multilateral institutions for infringing on American sovereignty, and a strong ideological conviction in the moral righteousness and superiority of American values of freedom, liberty and democracy.²⁰ This neoconservative vision of American primacy, and especially the strategic emphasis to act unilaterally and preemptively when U.S. national security seems threatened, would centrally inform the so-called ‘Bush-doctrine.’²¹ The experts of AEI, PNAC and other conservative think tanks were also major voices in promoting and in fact co-producing the political discourse of the global ‘war on terror’ in response to the events of 9/11.²²

Under the Obama presidency, AEI continued to promote a grand strategy of American primacy, including support for large defense budgets, unilateral assertiveness and military interventions for regime change. This was despite the heavy criticism the costly Iraq and Afghanistan experiences have produced on the political stage, in academic circles, and the media against this neo-imperial vision of

¹⁹ Cf., “Project for the New American Century,” IPS Right Web, accessed January 21, 2014, http://www.rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/project_for_the_new_american_century.

²⁰ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “Statement of Principles,” Project for the New American Century, June 3, 1997, accessed January 21, 2014, <http://web.archive.org/web/20070810113753/www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>.

²¹ Cf., Krauthammer, “The Bush Doctrine,” p. 42.

²² See *Croft, Culture, Crisis and America’s War on Terror*, pp. 235-239.

American global power projection and unrestricted hegemony. From the texts of Brzezinski to Mearsheimer and Maddow, various reformulations of American grand strategy under the auspices of engagement and restraint have been published in popular and formal discourse, uniting former political practitioners, conservative IR scholars and liberal political commentators in their criticism of neoconservative geopolitics. They all stressed the limits of U.S. power over the geopolitical imagination of American exceptionalism and military-technological supremacy.

Yet, as explained in the last chapter, for the most part this critical attitude towards American primacy did not result in abandoning the belief in the virtues of the global leadership of the United States, or lead to the replacement of hegemony with an alternate grand strategy imagination altogether. It is rather that the neoconservative vision of American primacy, as one particular unilateral and military power centric articulation of hegemony has fallen out of favor with most prominent discursive producers.

Politically, this contestation of primacy is no longer limited to the liberal end of the spectrum. In fact, increasingly there seems to be a split on the American Right concerning the preferred role and position of the United States in world politics that manifests itself in diverging grand strategy discourses.²³ The libertarian Tea Party movement, which gained prominence after 2009, is based on a strong ideological platform of limited government, tax cuts and fiscal austerity.²⁴ This has come into

²³ Cf., Charles Krauthammer, "How fractured is the GOP?," *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2013, accessed January 21, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-how-fractured-is-the-gop/2013/08/01/6fd6f816-fada-11e2-9bde-7ddaa186b751_story.html. Krauthammer speaks in this context of a conflict between 'isolationist' and 'internationalist' tendencies in the Republican Party.

²⁴ See Ben McGrath, "The Movement," *The New Yorker*, February 1, 2010, accessed February 6, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/02/01/100201fa_fact_mcgrath?currentPage=all; Anthony DiMaggio,

conflict with political demands of traditional conservatives for continued large-scale defense budgets of the kind that were introduced after 9/11. Here, the budget hawks of the Tea Party and the libertarian Cato Institute stand against the defense hawks of the Republican establishment and neoconservative think tanks such as AEI.

In the context of grand strategy, this political confrontation manifested itself in competing visions of primacy and restraint, where conservative and libertarian think tanks have formulated fundamentally contrary policy recommendations for national security and American leadership in global affairs. Here, AEI maintained a very consistent and coherent link between its representation of the geopolitical identity of the United States as indispensable military superpower and its policy recommendations. For example, in 2012 AEI published a policy brief, arguing against mandatory budget cuts, to be implemented as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011.²⁵

Known as ‘sequestration,’ these across-the-board cuts in projected federal discretionary spending would amount to \$1.2 trillion over ten years, in the period of 2013-2021, distributed evenly between defense and non-defense related expenditures.²⁶ This would mean a cut of \$487 billion from the defense budget for this period.²⁷ In addition to cuts already implemented through the 2011 Budget Control Act, sequestration would ultimately result in cuts of almost \$1 trillion to the projected U.S. defense budget.

The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011).

²⁵ American Enterprise Institute, *Defense Spending 101* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2012).

²⁶ Congressional Budget Office, *Estimated Impact of Automatic Budget Enforcement Procedures Specified in the Budget Control Act* (Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2011).

²⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Overview – FY 2013 Defense Budget* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012).

These automatic cuts were ultimately put into effect after the failure of the Congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to find a compromise between Democrats and Republicans on fiscal spending reduction in late 2012, and are likely to remain in place for the coming years, occupying center stage in the political debate on national security and defense in Washington.²⁸ According to AEI: “(...) U.S. spending on national defense has given our country a military preeminence that, in turn, has yielded enormous strategic returns.”²⁹

The policy issue of federal defense spending would be directly related to a grand strategy vision of American primacy and the ability to “(...) maintain a military capable of keeping the great powers of the world at peace.”³⁰ AEI identifies a continuity of American hegemony ‘from the Cold War to the post-9/11 world’ and a rationale of maintaining a liberal world order that directly matches the identical correlation of U.S. military supremacy and world peace Kagan, Brooks and Wohlforth, and others have constructed in popular and formal grand strategy discourses. Kagan for example explains how:

(...) the large gap in power between the United States and the other great powers tends to dampen natural competitive rivalries and deters attempts to establish regional hegemonies.³¹

²⁸ Cf., Mackenzie Eaglen, “The sequester is here to stay - now the military needs to get to work,” *Fox News*, May 8, 2013, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/05/08/sequester-is-here-to-stay-now-military-needs-to-get-to-work/>. In December 2013, a bipartisan budget deal was struck by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R) and Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray (D) on ‘sequester relief,’ erasing \$63 billion in across-the-board spending cuts for the federal budget in 2014 and 2015 (\$31.5 billion for the Pentagon), cf. John T. Bennett, “Senate OKs Sequester-Relief Budget Plan,” *Defense News*, December 18, 2013, accessed February 6, 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131218/DEFREG02/312180031/Senate-OKs-Sequester-Relief-Budget-Plan>; however overall sequestration levels were kept in place, extended to 2023, cf., Congressional Budget Office, *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013* (Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2013).

²⁹ American Enterprise Institute, *Defense Spending* 101, p. 5. These ‘strategic returns’ are detailed as: Protecting the security and prosperity of the United States and its allies; amplifying America’s diplomatic and economic leadership throughout the globe; preventing the outbreak of great-power wars that marked previous centuries; preserving the international order in the face of aggressive, illiberal threats. Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kagan, *World America Made*, p. 51.

For Brooks and Wohlforth, ‘the United States remains the sole superpower today’ and thus: “No other state has any claim to leadership commensurate with Washington’s.”³² This line of argumentation that establishes a causal link between the preeminence of U.S. military power and America’s global leadership role, and the existence of a liberal world order marked by peace, prosperity and freedom is a cross-discursive fixture of geopolitical imagination. It runs from *The World America Made* and *That Used To Be Us* through the majority of grand strategy articles in *Foreign Affairs*, and it finds its echoes in the cinematic displays of America’s military heroes saving the world, from Captain America to the Navy SEALs in *Act of Valor*.

It also constitutes a conservative consensus on national security and geopolitics, as a joint paper by AEI, the Heritage Foundation and the Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) documents, titled: *Defending Defense: Defense Spending, the Super Committee and the Price of Greatness*.³³ Remarkably, the report closes with a quote from Winston Churchill: “The people of the United States cannot escape world responsibility.”³⁴ This invocation of the historical narrative of the American involvement in World War 2 as necessary, morally righteous and victorious directly underwrites the geopolitical imagination of primacy and the political case for continued and even increased defense expenditures. Any deviation from this grand strategy, even a modest reduction in America’s global military posture, such as sequestration implies,

³² Brooks and Wohlforth, “Reshaping the World Order,” p. 55 and p. 58

³³ The Foreign Policy Initiative, American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation, *Defending Defense: Defense Spending, the Super Committee and the Price of Greatness* (Washington DC: Foreign Policy Initiative, American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation, 2011).

³⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

is in turn cast in the negative light of isolationism and a dangerous and irresponsible disengagement of the United States from world affairs.

The clear representation of China as potential threat that could undermine the stability in East Asia in AEI's geopolitical risk analysis likewise follows this logic. Checking and deterring a rising China is a central argument for continued substantial investments in U.S. defense capabilities, including increased research and development (R&D) for future weapons systems, and the strengthening of the American military involvement in the Asia-Pacific.³⁵

Here, China is cast as potential successor to Imperial and Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union; a revisionist, authoritarian power that could seek to establish regional hegemony and upset the established international order promoted by Western liberal democracies. In fact, in the eyes of AEI scholars this geopolitical competition for political and economic influence and regional dominance has already begun: "We conclude that a struggle between the United States and China is underway for mastery of the Asia-Pacific region."³⁶ In Asia, the United States should subsequently increase and strengthen its military presence on all levels.³⁷ Casting China as geo-strategic rival of the U.S. has become integral to the conservative primacy discourse.

³⁵ Cf., Thomas G. Mahnken, *Asia in the Balance* (Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2012).

³⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁷ Such measures include among others: continued development of the 'Conventional Prompt Global Strike system', consideration of development of a 'submarine-launched conventional ballistic missile,' and fielding of the 'Next-Generation Bomber' to provide a 'flexible, global strike capability.' Furthermore, the United States should consider whether 'continuing to abide by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty's global ban on the deployment of conventional ballistic and cruise missiles of intermediate range (500-5,500 kilometers) is in the best interests of the United States.' Ibid., p. 16.

An alternative grand strategy of offshore balancing, as advocated by the rival libertarian Cato Institute and supported by many realist IR scholars, is directly discarded by AEI, because it would ‘undercut deterrence’ of potential adversaries and undermine the confidence of America’s alliance partners in the reliability of the United States to come to their defense.³⁸

However, this firm belief in global primacy and military supremacy as the minimum requirement to maintain world order and great power peace does no longer cover the entire spectrum of grand strategy discourses on the conservative side. Calls for a grand strategy of restraint and offshore balancing are no longer limited to the scholarly debate among IR experts, but have found prominent support among Republican politicians that are associated with the Tea Party movement, such as the Republican Senator Rand Paul.³⁹ In February 2013, Paul gave a foreign policy speech at the Heritage Foundation in which he declared:

(...) a more restrained foreign policy is the true conservative foreign policy, as it includes two basic tenets of true conservatism: respect for the constitution, and fiscal discipline.⁴⁰

Mead has commented in *Foreign Affairs* that foreign policy views in the Tea Party tend to be dominated by two strands of populist sentiment:⁴¹ The first is a unilateral Jacksonianism that combines a firm belief in the singularity of American exceptionalism with skepticism toward the continued role of the United States as sole guarantor of a liberal world order. As demonstrated in chapter four, this view has found multiple expressions in popular discourse in such bestsellers as *After America*,

³⁸ AEI, *Defense Spending* 101, p. 8.

³⁹ Cf., Justin Logan, “Rand Paul is no isolationist,” *Politico*, August 7, 2013, accessed January 21, 2014, <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/08/rand-paul-is-no-isolationist-95286.html>.

⁴⁰ Quoted in: Matthew Duss, “The Isolationist are coming!,” *The American Prospect*, May 2, 2013, accessed January 21, 2014, <http://prospect.org/article/isolationists-are-coming>.

⁴¹ Mead, “The Tea Party in American Foreign Policy,” p. 40.

Trickle Down Tyranny, or *Screwed* that describe this peculiar, populist version of exceptionalism. The second strand, Mead describes as Jeffersonian neo-isolationism that seeks to minimize the use of American military power abroad and focus on domestic issues, economic growth and fiscal prudence.

This is the discourse of ‘non-interventionism’ as promoted by Senator Paul and others. Yet, despite their differences both strands are highly critical of ‘liberal internationalism’ and thus challenge the Washington consensus on global leadership and the use of U.S. military power in the service for global stability and security as the various conservative and liberal proponents of the hegemony discourse define it.⁴² Thus, the grand strategy discourse associated with the Tea Party stands in contrast to both the neoconservative advocates of ‘benevolent hegemony’ and unilateral primacy as well as liberal internationalists and their vision of ‘deep engagement’ and support for humanitarian interventions. The ongoing significance of this bi-partisan consensus was well illustrated in an op-ed article in the *Washington Post* in April 2013 in which the former senators Joe Lieberman, a Democrat, and John Kyl, a Republican, stated:

We must not wait for another catastrophe to persuade us of the continuing importance of American internationalism. Regardless of party or ideology, our leaders must forge a new consensus about the U.S. role in the world. That will require engaging with those who disagree to rebuild and reaffirm a bipartisan foreign policy consensus based on the lessons of history.⁴³

Here again, the historical narrative of the pivotal role of the United States in creating and maintaining a liberal world order is the key discursive argument. American hegemony means peace and stability, restraint equals isolationism and potentially

⁴² Cf., Mead, “The Tea Party in American Foreign Policy,” p. 42.

⁴³ Joseph I. Lieberman and Jon Kyl, “The danger of repeating the cycle of American isolationism,” *Washington Post*, April 26, 2013, accessed January 21, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-repeating-the-cycle-of-american-isolationism/2013/04/25/16da45f8-a90c-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f_story.html.

catastrophe. It is an argumentative line that runs from Munich to Pearl Harbor and 9/11. The Washington consensus represents a deeply entrenched, politically powerful and emotive linking of restraint with isolationism that the Cato Institute in turn is determined to dissolve in the public policy debate.

In fact, Cato devotes an entire website on the issue, explaining that: “(...) interventionists brand their opponents as isolationists to delegitimize them and to stifle debate.”⁴⁴ As described in chapter five, a similar effort was made by Waltz, Mearsheimer and other prominent realists to differentiate offshore balancing from ‘isolationism,’ in order to deflect attempts to delegitimize their contribution to the grand strategy discourse in IR. If ‘leadership’ represents an intertextual fixture and faithful mantra in American foreign and security policy discourse, then ‘isolationism’ appears as its nemesis, the ultimate taboo to be avoided at all cost. In contrast to this establishment stand, Cato represents restraint as superior alternative to hegemony, declaring:

The foreign policy of restraint is particularly appropriate in the modern era as threats to the United States have waned, and as the high costs and dubious benefits of a hyperactive, interventionist foreign policy are glaringly apparent.⁴⁵

Political proponents of U.S. global leadership construct their discourse around the narrative of U.S. victory and lasting success in World War 2 and the Cold War. The libertarians at Cato draw their historical lessons for offshore balancing from more recent events: U.S. failure in Iraq and Afghanistan. Here, the immense drain on financial and military resources these interventions have meant for the United States,

⁴⁴ “Isolationism,” Cato Institute, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.cato.org/pages/isolationism>. Cato explains that the use of the label ‘isolationism’ originated in the 19th century, and is associated in particular with the staunch advocate of American imperialism and sea power Alfred Mahan, who used it to discredit his opponents, cf., *ibid*.

⁴⁵ “Isolationism,” Cato Institute.

and the failure to establish lasting democratic transformation and regional stability are seen as cautionary tale about the dangers of ‘imperial overstretch’ and the folly of over-committing America aboard.

When it comes to individual policy issues, Cato accordingly translates restraint into concrete plans for changing rather than perpetuating the established national security design of the United States. On the Asian pivot, directly contrasting policy recommendations made by AEI, Cato explains:

America ought to pivot home. [...] American policymakers should work to lessen and ultimately remove the forward-deployed U.S. military presence in the region, helping establish more powerful national militaries in like-minded states. The new administration should encourage Asian nations to work together on security issues without the United States leading the way.⁴⁶

When it comes to sequestration, Cato likewise recommends a policy course that contradicts the primacy discourse, outlining cuts of more than \$1.2 trillion over ten years.⁴⁷ These are presented not only as unproblematic, but indeed favorable. However, far from merely trimming the defense budget for fiscal reasons, Cato proposes a fundamental change in grand strategy that would maintain national security at far less cost to the American taxpayer:

The United States confuses what it wants from its military, which is global primacy or hegemony, with what its needs, which is safety. [...] We can defend ourselves with far more restrained military objectives, at far less cost (...).⁴⁸

This change to a grand strategy of restraint, self-defense and offshore balancing would entail a substantial downsizing of U.S. military capabilities on all levels.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Justin Logan, *China, America, and the Pivot to Asia* (Washington DC: Cato, 2013), p. 22.

⁴⁷ Benjamin H. Friedman and Christopher Preble: *Budgetary Savings from Military Restraint* (Washington DC: Cato, 2010).

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁹ These would include: cutting the end-strength of the Army and Marine Corps by roughly one third, a reduction of six fighter wing equivalents from the Air Force, the elimination of four carrier battle groups, four expeditionary strike groups and a commensurate number of ships from the Navy, deep cuts in nuclear weapons

While such measures would be characterized as unacceptable and irresponsible risk to U.S. national security in context with U.S. hegemony, as AEI and others demonstrate, for Cato it presents the opportunity to reorient and refocus the role and position of the United States while ‘avoiding needless military conflict and protecting our prosperity.’

Finally, it is not surprising that both AEI and Cato criticize the grand strategy of the Democratic Obama administration. Yet, they do so for different reasons. In the eyes of Thomas Donnelly, co-director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at AEI, and formerly a senior fellow at PNAC, the grand strategy of the Obama administration is one of ‘retrenchment and withdrawal’, both in the Middle East and Asia, where he characterizes the pivot as ‘thus far entirely rhetorical.’⁵⁰ Interviewed for this thesis, he pointed out that far from confirming American primacy, he saw a mindset of offshore balancing taking hold among leading members of the administration.⁵¹

For Christopher Preble on the other hand, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, Obama purses a grand strategy of ‘hegemony on the cheap.’ When interviewed, he identified Obama’s policy as neither committed to global primacy, nor changing to a truly alternative course of restraint and offshore balancing.⁵² For

and missile defense spending, reducing administrative overhead and intelligence spending, cutting military construction costs, canceling several weapons systems, and reforming the provision of military pay and benefits, *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Thomas Donnelly, interview by Georg Löffmann, 29 May 2013.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Christopher Preble, interview by Georg Löffmann, 21 May 2013.

Asia, this grand strategy in-between results in an attempt to simultaneously contain and engage China. A policy Cato succinctly refers to as ‘congagement’.⁵³

Rebalancing hegemony – The Asian pivot, the Obama Administration and the bipartisan consensus on American leadership

While AEI and Cato stand politically and ideologically close to the oppositional Republican Party, the think tanks belonging to the centrist spectrum either carefully stress bipartisan neutrality, or are openly sympathetic to the Obama administration. Similar to the close relationship between AEI and the George W. Bush Administration, the left-of-center leaning Brookings Institution for example has had ties to both the Clinton and Obama administrations. Brookings is considered to be one of the most prestigious and influential think tanks in Washington.⁵⁴ The president of Brookings is Strobe Talbot, deputy secretary of state under President Clinton, while the former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and current National Security Advisor to President Obama, Susan Rice worked at Brookings as senior fellow in foreign policy from 2002 to 2009.⁵⁵ However, Brookings also counts the leading neoconservative Robert Kagan among its senior fellows, underlining its bipartisan credentials.

Brookings’ centrist position on grand strategy does not demonstrate the clear ideological conservative or libertarian preferences for all out primacy or restraint, but

⁵³ Logan, p. 22.

⁵⁴ In fact, Brookings was titled ‘Think Tank of the Year 2012’ and No. 1 of the top ranking think tanks of the world. Cf., McGann, *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice*, p. 41. Established in 1916, it was the ‘first private organization devoted to the fact-based study of national public policy issues.’ “Brookings Institution History,” Brookings, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/history>.

⁵⁵ “Brookings Leadership,” Brookings, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/leadership>; “Susan E. Rice,” Brookings, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/experts/rices>.

rather projects a bipartisan mainstream vision of U.S. grand strategy, anchored on the well established imagination of America's essential global leadership, its responsibility for a liberal international order and the central importance of engaging U.S. allies and partners around the world politically, economically and militarily.⁵⁶ Within this discourse of hegemonic engagement, there is a spectrum of policy recommendations on rebalancing to Asia, or cutting the defense budget, but in general these propositions do not intend to fundamentally alter the national security design of the United States.

On sequestration Brookings occupies a middle ground. In early 2013 the think tank published a paper, where instead of accepting or opposing sequestration outright, it argued for modest defense cuts of \$200 billion over ten years.⁵⁷ Brookings connects with the basic hegemony discourse in its assessment that U.S. military power is a 'stabilizing element in the current global environment.'⁵⁸ Here again the geopolitical imagination of policy research intersects with the representation of the United States in popular culture. Friedman and Mandelbaum for example explained how 'America's navy safeguards the sea-lanes' and its 'military deployments [...] underwrite security in Europe and East Asia.'⁵⁹

This role of global deterrence and intervention is linked by Brookings to the capability of America's Armed Forces to carry out two major wars simultaneously.⁶⁰

Full sequestration however, Brookings assessed as 'unwise', 'excessive and ill-

⁵⁶ Cf., Bruce Jones, Thomas Wright and Jane Esberg, *Reviving American Leadership: The Next President Should Continue on the Path Obama Has Set* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2012).

⁵⁷ Michael O'Hanlon, *A Moderate Plan for Additional Defense Cuts* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2013).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵⁹ Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 25.

⁶⁰ O'Hanlon, *A Moderate Plan for Additional Defense Cuts*, p. 31.

advised,' curtailing the capability of the United States for global power projection and armed intervention, limiting its armed forces to conduct only one major ground combat operation.⁶¹ This would result in 'dramatic changes in America's basic strategic approach to the world.'⁶² While the text mentioned the ability of partners and allies to provide for security, this happens largely through the lens of hegemonic engagement where the United States must be the primary anchor of such security alliances, as with Japan and South Korea, continuing the forward deployment of U.S. forces, as on the island of Okinawa, and only recommending a limited redeployment of military personnel to offshore installations elsewhere, for example to U.S. facilities on Guam or in California.⁶³

On the Asian pivot, Brookings concluded that Obama was striking a careful balance between 'diplomatic engagement' and 'military offshore balancing', one however that did not negate America's leadership role or liberal responsibility as realists or the libertarians at Cato would have it:

What is novel about Obama's version of offshore balancing is its moral dimension, which centers on America's exceptionalism—including its respect for human rights—rather than just its hegemony.⁶⁴

In Brookings' assessment, the Asian pivot represents yet another hybrid form of grand strategy discourse that simultaneously incorporates elements of hegemony, engagement and restraint. This further contributes to the assessment of contradicting discourses and a multiplicity of geopolitical imagination under the Obama administration that the analysis of *Foreign Affairs* produced in the previous chapter. Further underlining this analysis is Michael O'Hanlon, director of research for

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

⁶² Ibid., p. 31.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 28-29.

⁶⁴ Jones, Wright and Esberg, p. 5.

foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, who diagnosed a tension of geopolitical imagination in the way President Obama envisions the global role of the United States, when interviewed for this thesis:

He wants to lead, but through coalitions and alliances more than Bush. He wants to correct for what he saw as the unilateralist impulses of the Bush administration, but he wants to do all this while limiting American engagement.⁶⁵

Another Brookings policy brief adds to this assessment by analyzing a change in Obama's foreign policy during his first term: "Obama's campaign platform of peace through diplomatic engagement and military restraint played off the post-Bush distaste for war."⁶⁶ While this focus on engagement and restraint has not been replaced: "(...) increasingly it has been balanced by overt and covert military action, coercive diplomacy, and a deepening of alliance commitments."⁶⁷

Here, there is yet another articulation of the synchronicity of contradicting geopolitical ideas existing in American grand strategy discourse. It seems that under President Obama discourses of hegemony, engagement and restraint have simultaneously provided key representations of imagination about America's preferred course in world politics, leading to fluctuating priorities and potentially contradicting policy outcomes that could not be subsumed under one central strategic narrative.

⁶⁵ Michael O'Hanlon, interview by Georg Löffmann, June 1, 2013.

⁶⁶ Jones, Wright and Esberg, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Further stressing this is Richard K. Betts, senior fellow for national security studies at the centrist Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Asked ‘what is Obama’s grand strategy’, as part of a Q&A segment on the think tank’s website, he responded:

President Obama's foreign policy balances between contending views, some more liberal than the preceding Republican Bush administration, and some more conservative than the liberal wing of his own Democratic Party. [...] Obama endorses multilateralism in security policy, but pursues unilateral initiatives where collaboration is impractical or undesirable (...).⁶⁸

This multiplicity has frequently lead to charges of Obama missing a grand strategy altogether.⁶⁹ Indeed, as Betts argues: “(...) the Obama administration does not really have a grand strategy in the usual sense of the term, and that is not a bad thing.”⁷⁰

This assessment that Obama is largely doing the ‘right thing,’ but does not offer a clearly defined or spelled out strategic vision is mostly shared by the two other prominent centrist think tanks analyzed here, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

According to its website, since its founding in 1962, CSIS ‘has been dedicated to finding ways to sustain American prominence and prosperity as a force for good in the world.’⁷¹ CSIS, categorized as right-of-center by the Foreign Policy Research Institute, was ranked the number one think tank in the world for security and international affairs by the University of Pennsylvania’s 2012 *Global Go To Think Tanks Report*.⁷²

⁶⁸ Richard K. Betts, “What is Obamas grand strategy,” Council on Foreign Relations, April 16, 2013, accessed January 24, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/grand-strategy/obamas-grand-foreign-policy-strategy/p30457>.

⁶⁹ As for example in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, see Drezner, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy?”

⁷⁰ Betts, “What is Obamas grand strategy.”

⁷¹ “About Us,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://csis.org/about-us>. Members of the board of trustees of CSIS are for example: Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft, and General James L. Jones; all former national security advisors under both Democrat and Republican Presidents.

⁷² McGann, *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the U.S.*, p. 12.

CSIS ultimately constructs a grand strategy discourse that puts greater emphasis on military power than the Brookings Institution. On the Asian pivot for example, CSIS concluded that ‘preeminence in the Western Pacific’ has allowed the U.S. military to occupy an advantageous position in the region.⁷³ In response to the perceived challenge by China, in particular its development of military technologies that could potentially hinder U.S. access to and movement within the region, labeled ‘A2/AD,’ the United States should strengthen its position through a combination of diplomatic engagement, military rebalancing and increased alliance cooperation, again reflecting a view of multilateral hegemony.⁷⁴ “(...) the overall trend should be toward more jointness, integration, collaboration, and presence across the region.”⁷⁵ An alternative strategy of offshore balancing was in contrast characterized as ‘ahistorical and counterproductive.’⁷⁶ Again, World War 2 and the failure of isolationism in the 1930s provided the central lens through which the geopolitical posture of the United States is reviewed.

In 2012, CSIS was asked by the Department of Defense to ‘commission an independent assessment of U.S. force posture in Asia’ in compliance with Section 346 of the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act.⁷⁷ This extensive report, directly addressed to then Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta not only demonstrates the prominent role of external policy advise and research for the formulation of U.S. national security, but also represents an important document in American grand

⁷³ Michael J. Green, *Rethinking U.S. Military Presence in Asia and the Pacific* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012), p. 18.

⁷⁴ A2/AD stands for anti-access/area denial, and is referring in particular to Chinese military capabilities to potentially counter American air and naval assets in the Asia-Pacific and thus challenge U.S. military supremacy in the region cf., “The Emerging Anti-Access/Area-Denial Challenge,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://csis.org/publication/emerging-anti-accessarea-denial-challenge>.

⁷⁵ Green, *Rethinking U.S. Military Presence in Asia and the Pacific* p. 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

⁷⁷ Center for Strategic and International Studies: *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment*, p. 3.

strategy discourse, again reconfirming the significance of an established bipartisan Washington consensus on the global leadership role of the United States. CSIS concluded that:

America sustained a remarkably consistent defense policy for fifty years of the Cold War because our national leaders at the outset established a durable consensus on national challenges and strategic objectives. We now need a comparable framework for the next thirty years in Asia.⁷⁸

Again, a historical narrative of U.S. dependent peace and stability would build the essential argument for America's continued military preeminence and essential leadership role, as already encountered multiple times in formal and popular discourses of hegemony.⁷⁹ Against this continuity, the discursive nuances between the left-of-center Brookings and the right-of-center CSIS are largely cosmetic in nature.

How blurring the lines between the formally independent expertise of think tank research, and the practical discourse of policymaking can be, was also revealed, when an article in the *Boston Globe* reported in 2013 how a speech by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel at an Asian security summit in Singapore had been drafted by security experts of CSIS, rather than by his own Pentagon staff.⁸⁰ Ernest Z. Bower, one of the CSIS experts identified as having been involved in preparing Hagel's Singapore speech, later published an article on the CSIS website, titled "Engagement

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁹ In fact, the report establishes a historic continuity of geopolitical imagination that defines the hegemonic U.S. role in the region from the 19th century onwards: "Historically, U.S. interests in Asia have been defined around three inter-related themes: protection of the American people, expansion of trade and economic opportunity, and support for universal democratic norms. Since the decline of British maritime power in the Pacific at the end of the 19th Century, the underlying geostrategic objective for the United States in Asia and the Pacific has been to maintain a balance of power that prevents the rise of any hegemonic state from within the region that could threaten U.S. interests by seeking to obstruct American access or dominate the maritime domain," *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁰ Bender, "Many D.C. think tanks now players in partisan wars;" The speech by Hagel at the IISS Asia Security Summit, or 'Shangri-La Dialogue,' described a geopolitical vision of American hegemonic engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, including a confirmation of U.S. military hegemony, stating that: (...) we will ensure freedom of action throughout the region well into the future. Chuck Hagel, "Remarks by Secretary Hagel at the IISS Asia Security Summit," June 1, 2013, accessed April 11, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5251>.

in the Indo-Pacific: The Pentagon Leads by Example.” Here, Bower applauded the Secretary and the Pentagon for taking the lead in the administration’s Asia strategy, highlighting the very same speech he apparently helped to write:

Hagel took engagement with ASEAN to a new level during his June speech at the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore when he invited the ASEAN defense ministers to Hawaii in 2014 (...).⁸¹

This episode further underlines how the dominant consensus on grand strategy is reinforced through the intertextual and intellectual exchange between policy circles and research experts, and how it operates through an elite network of active and former government officials, military officers, defense contractors, security experts and geopolitical thinkers concentrated in Washington DC.

This prevalent mainstream consensus was somewhat modified however by another integral member of the foreign policy establishment, the centrist Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).⁸² CFR is a highly influential and prestigious institution in American public policy discourse, publishing the prominent *Foreign Affairs* journal and counting senior politicians, former Presidents, CIA directors, Secretaries of State and Defense, as well as high-profile bankers, lawyers, professors, and senior media figures among its members.⁸³ Unlike other think tanks, CFR officially takes no

⁸¹ Ernest Z. Bower, “Engagement in the Indo-Pacific: The Pentagon Leads by Example,” *CSIS*, August 22, 2013, accessed April 11, 2014, <http://csis.org/publication/engagement-indo-pacific-pentagon-leads-example>.

⁸² Founded in 1921 to enhance knowledge about international relations following America’s involvement in World War I, the think tank describes its mission as: (...) dedicated to being a resource for its members, government officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries. “Mission Statement,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/about/mission.html>.

⁸³ Among its members in 2013 are for example: Madeline Albright, Andrew Bacevich, James Baker, Bill Clinton, Robert Gates, John Mearsheimer, and Fareed Zakaria. “Membership Roster,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/about/membership/roster.html>.

This is not a recipe for isolationism. Rather, it is a new grand strategy for America that views national security as a function of both foreign and domestic policy.⁸⁹

Haas essentially spells out a geopolitical vision of simultaneous hegemonic engagement and restraint that President Obama and the country should pursue. This multidimensional course of action at the same time provokes charges of missing a clear-cut geopolitical vision in foreign policy and national security from conservative and libertarian think tanks, as well as from prominent academics, and even scholars associated with such centrist organizations as Brookings or CFR itself.

The restraint argument ill fits with the established mainstream notion of global leadership and historic continuity that underwrites the Washington consensus on grand strategy. While in general the centrist think tanks assess the foreign and security policy of the Obama administration favorably, in particular stressing the correct decision of rebalancing towards Asia as geopolitical move of vital importance for securing America's future, they struggle to reconcile its contradicting representations and conflicting policy priorities into one single coherent narrative or grand strategy label.⁹⁰

A new way forward? A progressive grand strategy of sustainable security

The idea of restoring America's standing in the world and its domestic power base unifies such diverse voices as the libertarian policy researchers at Cato and the

⁸⁹ Haas, "America Can Take a Breather".

⁹⁰ In fact this struggle to define post-Cold War American grand strategy extends beyond the Obama administration, Haas for example assesses that neither 'democracy promotion', nor 'humanitarianism', 'integration', or 'counter-terrorism' could provide an adequate label to provide an overarching foreign policy doctrine for the United States, cf. Haas, "The Restoration Doctrine."

president of the centrist Council on Foreign Relations. In fact, the idea of Congressional sequestration was born out of fear about the fiscal sustainability of the United States and its future ability to conduct domestic and foreign policies. But arguments for sustainability and restoration do not necessarily result in political demands for greater restraint.

On the progressive end of the political spectrum, the Center for American Progress (CAP) is one of the most prominent proponents for holistically reorienting policy on national security, yet it is also calling for an expansion of American engagement in the world. CAP was founded in 2003 by John Podesta, former chief of staff to President Clinton, with a liberal policy agenda to improve ‘the lives of Americans through progressive ideas and action.’ Politically, the think tank is clearly aligned with the Democratic Party.⁹¹

Departing from the usual national security centric perspective of defense, existential threats and national interests, CAP contributes a genuine novel element to the policy discourse of grand strategy by stressing ‘sustainability’ as essential component of any overarching American security design.⁹² The ‘project for sustainable security’ at CAP aims to rethink national security by linking it to ‘human security’ and ‘collective security,’ interconnecting diplomacy, defense and development in a collective grand strategy vision.⁹³

⁹¹ Its current president and chief executive officer for example, Neera Tanden, has served as director of domestic policy for the Obama-Biden presidential campaign and as policy director for the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign, “Neera Tanden,” Center for American Progress, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.americanprogress.org/about/staff/tanden-neera/bio/>.

⁹² “About sustainable security,” Center for American Progress, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.americanprogress.org/about/ss-about/>.

⁹³ Center for American Progress, *Sustainable Security 101* (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2009).

Instead of focusing almost exclusively on American leadership and military power, the grand strategy discourse of sustainability stresses multilateral responsibility and international cooperation to jointly manage ‘global transnational threats.’⁹⁴ This includes policy recommendations for increased development aid, an institutionalized government capacity for the promotion of global poverty reduction and economic growth, a strengthening of U.S. alliances, and the ‘reform and creation of strong international institutions.’⁹⁵ Similar to the restraint argument made by Cato or CFR the narrative of ill-fated U.S. attempts in nation building in Iraq and Afghanistan serves as central argument for changing the established national security consensus. Rather than a reorientation and limitation towards restraint and offshore balancing however, CAP envisions a strengthening and expanding of the U.S. engagement in world politics, as part of a global network for crisis prevention, human development and conflict resolution.

Within the sustainability discourse, the geopolitical identity of the United States continues to be represented through the paradigm of global leadership, the exclusivity and superiority of the United States and its material power however is stressed far less prominently than with the conservative or centrist think tanks. Instead, this progressive vision of grand strategy highlights global interconnectedness as central feature of geopolitics in the 21st century. Thus, the sustainability discourse promoted by CAP envisions maybe the most holistic policy change in American grand strategy perspective, next to Cato’s suggestions for offshore balancing and the end of American hegemony.

⁹⁴ Mainly terrorism, money laundering, illicit trade, criminal and drug syndicates, and global warming; *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

On national security, CAP translated this grand strategy vision of sustainability into policy recommendations for further cuts to the defense budget and military equipment.⁹⁶ Where sequestration envisions cuts of \$487 billion from originally projected federal spending, a 2012 report by CAP pointed out that, despite sequestration, in 2017: “(...) the Pentagon’s base budget will be larger than it is today and larger, in real terms, than it was on average during the Cold War.”⁹⁷

This was characterized as unfounded overinvestment in military resources and imbalance toward other political priorities: “We face no existential threats abroad at a time when we are long overdue for investment at home.”⁹⁸ Similarly, on the Asian pivot, CAP countered conservative assessments of China as challenging U.S. hegemony, and emphasized diplomatic engagement and economic cooperation over the military dimension of the U.S. rebalancing to Asia. As John Podesta, the president of CAP remarked in a speech in Japan at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation: “The rise of one country need not come at the expense of another, and [...] power does not need to be a zero-sum game.”⁹⁹

Sustainable security represents a direct repudiation of the realist understanding of international relations and neoconservative views of geopolitics. As such it negates unilateral primacy as well as calls for offshore balancing, a strategy strictly based on

⁹⁶ Lawrence J. Korb, Alex Rothman, and Max Hoffman, *\$100 Billion in Politically Feasible Defense Cuts for a Budget Deal* (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2012). The report recommends for example the cancellation of the F-35C stealth strike fighter program for the U.S. Navy, and reducing the personnel strength of the U.S. Army to 487.000 and the U.S.MC to 175.000, below the figures of 490.000 and 189.00 as envisioned by the Federal Government, and to reduce the number of deployed nuclear weapons from 1,700 to 1,100 by 2022.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁹ John Podesta, “U.S. Rebalance to Asia: Japan as the Key Partner,” Speech at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, April 13, 2012, accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2012/04/13/11491/u-s-rebalance-to-asia-japan-as-the-key-partner/>.

a realist, materialist calculation of military and economic power balances and regional hegemony. Intertextually, this progressive policy discourse primarily connects with popular notions of engagement, as forwarded for example by Brzezinski and Zakaria that stress the cooperative vision of American grand strategy in a global, multipolar network system.

As Brzezinski has written in context with Asia for example, the United States should be ‘cooperatively engaged in multilateral structures,’ and expand ‘global cooperation with China.’¹⁰⁰ In terms of formal expertise, the most obvious link exists to IR research on collective and cooperative security and the theoretical assumptions of liberal institutionalism.¹⁰¹ A 2008 report by CAP on sustainable security stated for example:

Offered up by academia and Washington’s think tanks, the concepts of ‘soft power,’ ‘integrated power,’ and ‘smart power’ bear in common the counsel that America must recalibrate its foreign policy to rely less on military power and more on other tools that can foster change and enhance our security.¹⁰²

A second, more surprising discursive connection links this liberal-progressive agenda for policy change to the center of American military power and grand strategy planning. Written in the Pentagon, but published by the liberal Woodrow Wilson Center, the ‘Mr. Y’ article provided an articulation of the sustainability argument that

¹⁰⁰ Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision*, p. 181.

¹⁰¹ Cf., Rodger A. Payne, “Cooperative Security: Grand Strategy Meets Critical Theory?” *Millennium* 40, no. 3 (2012): pp. 605-624. In addition, the premise of sustainable security also draws from ideas of ‘soft power’ and ‘smart power,’ as developed by Joseph Nye in that a comprehensive approach to U.S. foreign policy should go beyond the use of military power to advance American interests in a globalized world. See for example, Joseph S. Nye Jr., “The War on Soft Power,” *Foreign Policy*, April 12, 2011, accessed February 4, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/the_war_on_soft_power.

¹⁰² Gayle E. Smith, *In Search of Sustainable Security* (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2008), p. 12.

was directly encouraged by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Michael Mullen.¹⁰³

As one of the co-authors, Mark ‘Puck’ Mykleby explained in an interview with the author, the attempt was to ‘think outside the box’ of the usually threat fixated discourse of national security in Washington, and to address several issues that were seen as vital concerns for the longtime prosperity of the country.¹⁰⁴ The title of ‘Mr. Y’ in itself represents a trope of intertextuality in American grand strategy discourse in its obvious reference to the Mr. X article in *Foreign Affairs*, which was also alluded to in the popular *That Used to Be Us*. Here Friedman and Manelbaum bemoaned the fact that no one had written the U.S. a ‘long telegram’ after the end of the Cold war.¹⁰⁵ To strategy experts and popular authors alike, Mr. X, Kennan and containment remain symbols for the ideal of American grand strategy; simultaneously they stand for their ongoing frustration that nothing comparable has been formulated since.

In terms of practical policy impact, the sustainability discourse was in particular reflected in the *Quadrennial Diplomatic and Development Review* under Secretary

¹⁰³ Cf., John Norris, “The Y Article.” *Foreign Policy*, April 13, 2011, accessed February 4, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/13/the_y_article. The Mr. Y article argues that the United States must change its prevailing grand strategy discourse, specifically charging the nation to develop a ‘new narrative’ that no longer overemphasis military power, and hypes a myriad of existential security threats, but incorporates education, energy and the environment as vital issues of national interest in a holistic and comprehensive policy agenda of ‘national security and prosperity.’ The text states: “(...) we want to become the strongest competitor and most influential player in a deeply inter-connected global system, which requires that we invest less in defense and more in sustainable prosperity and the tools of effective global engagement.” Mr. Y, p. 3. Remarkably, this discursive intervention was undertaken by two officers that were working as ‘special strategic assistants’ to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest echelon of the American military hierarchy. Indeed, the idea of strategic sustainability seems to have taken hold among leading military officials, in particular in connection with the discussion about the United States’ fiscal deficit. As Admiral Mullen has stated, the greatest threat to U.S. national security is ‘unsustainable debt.’ CNN Wire Staff, “Mullen: Debt is top national security threat,” *CNN*, August 27, 2010, accessed February 4, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/U.S./08/27/debt.security.mullen/>.

¹⁰⁴ Col. ret. Mark ‘Puck’ Mykleby, co-author of the Mr. Y article, interview by Georg Löfflmann, June 7, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Cf., Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 15.

Clinton, a process that was officially endorsed by CAP.¹⁰⁶ Clinton's Director of Policy Planning, Anne-Marie Slaughter also wrote the preface for the Mr. Y article, further stressing the intertextual significance of the discourse of cooperative engagement and sustainability within the U.S. government. As demonstrated in the previous analysis of *Foreign Affairs*, this increased discursive profile of diplomacy and development associated with Clinton, Gates and others appeared as deliberate political reversal of the unilateralist vision of U.S. foreign policy under President Bush.

However, sustainability and cooperative security did not displace the central paradigm of military power and threat from the center of national security discourse, and engagement as grand strategy vision of global collective partnership did not supplant the key geopolitical imagination of American leadership and indispensability. In the end, as with offshore balancing and restraint, a vision of sustainable security remained too far outside the entrenched mainstream consensus on U.S. grand strategy as to be of greater political significance. This raises the question of the political influence of think tanks and how the external advice and research they offer to government translates into actual policy on national security and foreign policy.

¹⁰⁶ Cf., Lawrence Korb, Sean Duggan, and Laura Conley, *Integrating Security* (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2009), p. 1.

From grand strategy research to policy making: The Centre for a New American Security (CNAS) and the Obama administration

The Center for a New American Security has been highlighted as think tank with significant political impact under the Obama administration, due to several high-ranking officials that transferred into government from this organization. These include the founders of CNAS, Michèle Flournoy, who served as under secretary of defense for policy, and Kurt Campbell, who as assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs is considered to be one of the leading voices behind the 'Asian pivot' of strategically rebalancing the United States to the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰⁷ As the *Washington Post* has remarked: "When CNAS talks, people listen."¹⁰⁸ However, this closeness to the defense establishment and national security apparatus has also led to criticism concerning the independence of CNAS's research. As the journalist Nathan Hodge has commented:

Institutions like CNAS are also heavily funded by major weapons manufacturers and Pentagon contractors, creating potential conflicts of interest rarely disclosed in the media.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Michael Mazza for example considers Campbell and Clinton to have been the major architects behind the pivot, cf., Michael Mazza, "Asia's Four Big Questions for Obama's Second Term," *The Diplomat*, November 7, 2012, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/11/asias-four-big-questions-for-obamas-second-term/>. Flournoy seems even to have been considered as possible alternative to Chuck Hagel for Secretary of Defense, cf., Shashank Bengali and Matea Gold Tribune: "Policy ace Michele Flournoy could be first female Defense chief," *Stars and Stripes*, January 4, 2013, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://www.stripes.com/news/us/policy-ace-michele-flournoy-could-be-first-female-pentagon-chief-1.202861>.

¹⁰⁸ Lozada, "Setting Priorities for the Afghan War."

¹⁰⁹ Nathan Hodge, "The Nation: Who Drives The Think Tanks?," *NPR*, March 17, 2010, accessed February 2014, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124760902>. Hodge gave an illustrative example for the interplay between CNAS and the defense industry: "(...) a CNAS report on wartime contracting put the think tank's stamp of approval on government outsourcing. [...] In an e-mail, CNAS CEO Nathaniel Fick confirmed that KBR had donated \$200,000 (as of press time, KBR was not mentioned on its list of donors), and that the center is currently soliciting support from Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, DynCorp and Fluor, all companies that are in the business of "expeditionary support" contracting;" *ibid*. The former CEO of Lockheed Martin, Norman R. Augustine and the president and CEO of BAE Systems, Linda Hudson are on the board of directors of CNAS, cf., "People," Center for a New American Security, accessed February 5, 2014, http://www.cnas.org/people?field_people_type_tid=663.

The stated mission of CNAS is to ‘develop strong, pragmatic and principled national security and defense policies that promote and protect American interests and values.’¹¹⁰ Officially, a nonpartisan, independent think tank, the organization has been described as ‘a haven for hawkish Democrats,’ and was particularly noted for its outspoken support for an expansive military strategy of counter-insurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan, supporting such military figures as General David Petraeus and Stanley McChrystal against proponents of a more limited course of counter-terrorism, as for example Vice-President Joe Biden.¹¹¹

Commenting on CNAS’s role in the Washington discourse on national security policy, Kelley Beaucar Vlahos wrote in *The American Conservative*: “COIN today is the realm of CNAS, as if Frederick Kagan and AEI had never existed.”¹¹² This observation testifies to the intertextual crossover that connects Republicans and Democrats, conservative and centrist think tanks on issues of U.S. leadership and military supremacy, the Washington consensus on hegemony. They ‘all drank the Kool-Aid,’ in the words of Professor Bacevich.¹¹³ As the thesis has demonstrated so far however, this discursive network that promotes the geopolitical vision of American leadership also extends far beyond the Washington beltway to include Hollywood film studios, New York publishing houses, and Ivy League universities, where grand strategy discourses are being co-produced as dominant knowledge through popular bestsellers, top-grossing movies and high-impact research articles.

¹¹⁰ “Research,” Center for a New American Security, accessed February 5, 2014, <http://www.cnas.org/research-areas>.

¹¹¹ Cf., Lozada, “Setting Priorities for the Afghan War;” Bengali and Gold Tribune: “Policy ace Michele Flournoy could be first female Defense chief.” On the differing opinions on counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism strategies for Afghanistan in the Obama White House, see also Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

¹¹² Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, “One-Sided COIN,” *The American Conservative*, August 1, 2009, accessed February 4, 2014, <http://www.amconmag.com/article/2009/aug/01/00038/>.

¹¹³ Quoted in *ibid*.

Unlike Cato, or partially CAP, CNAS does not challenge the established discourse on national security and grand strategy, but is one of its leading proponents. Relating the elevated political position CNAS seems to have occupied in the Obama administration to the institution's views on national security and geopolitics, it becomes a further indicator how the dominant discourse in Washington tends to favor continuity over change, visions of leadership over ideas of restraint, and confidence in military power over reliance in diplomacy.

On grand strategy, CNAS has formulated a vision of hegemonic engagement that focuses on improving the effectiveness of U.S. military power, but never questions its indispensability for maintaining a liberal world order. In 2008, before the presidential elections, CNAS published a report, titled *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*.¹¹⁴ This text presented itself as repudiation of neoconservative primacy and preventive warfare and criticized the absence of a clear strategic vision in Washington. Brimley and Flournoy argued that it was indeed the absence of an American grand strategy under George W. Bush that had been reflected in the mismanagement of the Iraq War.¹¹⁵ A new grand strategy should therefore answer fundamental questions about 'America's core national interest' and 'the purpose of American power'.¹¹⁶

The report spells out four distinctive grand strategy alternatives: "Isolationism or restraint, selective engagement, cooperative security, and primacy."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Brimley and Flournoy, eds, *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*.

¹¹⁵ Brimley and Flournoy, "Introduction," in *Finding Our Way*, p. 5.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Shawn Brimley, "Finding Our Way," in *Finding Our Way*, p. 17.

Following the line of the conservative and centrist think tanks, ‘isolationism’ is linked to the discourse of offshore balancing and restraint, and the realist school of IR, referring to Layne and Posen in particular.¹¹⁸ Selective engagement is presented as ‘hybrid strategy’ that combines a ‘forward posture’ in security matters with general support for liberal goals of ‘free markets, human rights, and international openness.’¹¹⁹ Cooperative security is mainly characterized as vision of liberal institutionalism, naming Ikenberry as one of its main proponents.¹²⁰ Finally, primacy and hegemony are used interchangeably to describe a grand strategy that seeks to perpetuate the ‘unipolar moment’ to ensure ‘continued global stability,’ as endorsed for example by Krauthammer, Mandelbaum, Kagan and AEI.¹²¹

CNAS itself proposed a grand strategy of ‘sustainment’. This strategic ‘long-term vision’ essentially reproduced the dominant establishment discourse of liberal hegemony, where the United States, beyond defending its own homeland, promotes free trade, guarantees access to the ‘global commons’ of sea, air and cyberspace, maintains a global network of partnerships, alliances and forwardly deployed bases, and supports great power peace through its ability to militarily dominate potential rivals.¹²²

While CNAS warned against the dangers of overextension and exhaustion that result from a geopolitical vision of American primacy, it equally distanced itself against a view of restraint, offshore balancing or isolationism, where the United States defines

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18. According to Robert J. Art: “(...) it takes neither an isolationist, unilateralist path at one extreme nor a world policeman role on the other.” Quoted in, *ibid.*

¹²⁰ Ibid., 18-19.

¹²¹ Ibid., 19.

¹²² Cf., Shawn Brimley, Michèle Flournoy, and Vikram J. Singh, “Making America Grand Again,” in *Finding Our Way*, pp. 125-148.

its national security simply along the lines of self-defense. When it comes to ideas of cooperative engagement, alliances and partnerships are seen as vital instrument of American power and influence in the world, but not as collective body of global governance, or concert of powers that could replace or supplant U.S. leadership. Central to the argument is the conviction that the United States has to lead, but that it cannot lead without support:

No matter how powerful the United States is, it cannot effectively address these challenges alone. To safeguard our security and prosperity we must be able to inspire others to make common cause with us.¹²³

The centrality of American leadership was also the common thread running through the 2012 follow-up report named *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*.¹²⁴ Although the authors collected there again emphasized different aspects of national security policy, they all confirmed a hegemonic identity of the United States in world politics as guiding principle of American grand strategy.¹²⁵

¹²³ Ibid., p. 148.

¹²⁴ Fontaine and Lord, eds, *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*.

¹²⁵ As Art writes, the United States has been a hegemon, not because it can dominate 'all other great powers at once,' but because it is a 'leader.' Robert J. Art, "Selective Engagement in the Era of Austerity," in *America's Path*, p. 15. Art offers a modified version of 'selective engagement,' where the United States continues to provide a global leadership role through its forwardly deployed military and the provision of 'collective goods.' Ibid., p. 24. Betts on the other hand, argues that the emphasis on supplying global collective goods in American national security discourse is overstated, and that the United States can afford a grand strategy of hegemonic restraint, or 'limited retrenchment,' facing no existential threats to its security; Richard K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose," in *America's Path*, pp. 31-42. Betts sees the 'leading from behind approach' in the Libya intervention as perfect example for this 'soft primacy' approach to world politics; ibid., p. 36. As he explains: "The mission of American leadership is a mantra among the foreign policy elite, and it should indeed remain a national goal. It is a mistake however, to equate leadership with imposing U.S. control or ensuring good outcomes on all important issues;" ibid., p. 35. Peter Feaver on the other hand suggests to maintain the established continuity of U.S. hegemony: "a strategy of leadership that has the United States bearing the burdens of the sole superpower in order to preserve the existing global order as long as possible." Peter Feaver, "American Grand Strategy at the Crossroads: Leading from the front, leading from behind or not leading at all," in *America's Path*, pp. 59-71; p. 59. Finally, Slaughter, similar to CAP, stresses the element of cooperative security and engagement most strongly, and suggests a grand strategy of 'network centrality,' yet she still envisions the United States as the 'central node' in various global networks, providing U.S. leadership for global security and international peace, and open world economy and the promotion of human rights and development. Anne-Marie Slaughter, "A Grand Strategy of Network Centrality," in *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, pp. 45-56. While abandoning a realist, power and state-centric perspective of uni-, bi- or multipolarity dominating the international system, the geopolitical identity of the United States as indispensable leader remains unchanged as Slaughter demonstrates: "The United States should thus strive to be the most central node – the supernode – in the networks that are most important to advancing its interests and that are most connected to other networks;" ibid., p. 46.

The central paradigm of leadership extends far beyond a neoconservative grand strategy of primacy, and shapes ideas from ‘selective engagement,’ to ‘network centrality,’ and ‘soft primacy.’ This largely reduces the character of these strategies to mere variations of hegemony, instead of comprehensive alternatives in understanding America’s role in the world. As CNAS itself has remarked:

(...) there is little that is fundamentally new in a strategy emphasizing the very theme and currents that lie deep within American history and the bipartisan exercise of statecraft over man decades.¹²⁶

The mantra of American leadership is the central paradigm that orients American grand strategy discourse. As a result, none of the research conducted by CNAS or the authors collected by it, offer more than variations of the hegemony theme. Apparently, only a think tank that adheres to this paradigm can hope to have significant policy impact in Washington. It was in particular the reputation for pragmatism and technocratic expertise that build the national security credentials of CNAS and raised its profile under the Obama administration.¹²⁷ This seems to correspond with many expert assessments of President Obama as pursuing an un-ideological, pragmatic course in foreign affairs, where grand visions are eschewed in exchange for workable solutions.¹²⁸ However, this alleged pragmatism nonetheless revolves around a geopolitical vision that represents an item of faith in America politics.

¹²⁶ Brimley, Flournoy, and Singh, p. 138.

¹²⁷ Cf., Lozada, “Setting Priorities for the Afghan War,” *Bengali and Gold Tribune*: “Policy ace Michele Flournoy could be first female Defense chief;” Beaucar Vlahos, “One-Sided COIN.”

¹²⁸ Cf., Martin S. Indyk, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Bending History: Barack Obama’s Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Brookings, 2012); David Milne, “Pragmatism or what? The future of U.S. foreign policy,” *International Affairs* 88, no. 5 (2012): pp. 935-951; Betts, “What is Obamas grand strategy;” Drezner, “Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy;” Robert Singh, *Barack Obama’s Post-American Foreign Policy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

Conclusion

The CNAS reports on grand strategy document in an exemplary fashion that in Washington DC, the political debate on America's role in the world is an extremely limited intellectual exchange that revolves around a seemingly sacrosanct geopolitical imagination of American superiority, leadership and indispensability. It is the illusion of a debate on grand strategy, rather than an actual debate that takes place inside the Washington beltway. As Hodge has remarked, 'the Beltway consensus' is built through 'the subtle reinforcement of conventional wisdom.'¹²⁹

This conventional wisdom frames the political grand strategy discourse and orients the policy recommendations of the most influential think tanks that form an integral part of the national security and foreign policy establishment. This also corresponds with the findings of the previous chapters in that hegemony represents an intertextual fixture of American identity construction in world politics that dominates the geopolitical imagination in both popular culture and formal expertise, projecting ideas and images of U.S. hegemony from *Battleship* to *Foreign Affairs*.

It seems questionable, if fundamental change in American grand strategy is possible, when virtually all options discussed operate with the same understanding of the preferred U.S. role in world politics. Studying the think tank led policy research and advise exposes further how, beyond a neutral assessment of interests, means and ends, American grand strategy constitutes a world view, or *weltanschauung*, where fundamental elements are not derived from empirical, scientific analysis, but merely

¹²⁹ Hodge, "The Nation: Who Drives The Think Tanks?"

imposed a priori as normative convictions of truth. This fundamental truth that the leading role of the United States in the world is essential for the preservation of world peace, the uninterrupted flow of free trade, and the functioning of a liberal, international order is largely build on a narrative of historic continuity that sets in with the American involvement in World War 2 and is projected into the foreseeable future. This image centrally underwrites the mainstream bipartisan consensus on U.S. grand strategy.

The one true outlier to this Washington consensus on national security in public policy discourse is the libertarian Cato Institute that promotes a distinctive grand strategy alternative of restraint and offshore balancing. Politically, it is telling that this vision is only endorsed by the populist Tea Party movement; itself considered to exist at the fringes of political discourse on American foreign and security policy. From the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute, to the various centrist and bipartisan think tanks, to the progressive Center for American Progress: conventional wisdom holds that restraint equals isolationism. Such a grand strategy is then denounced as dangerous and morally reprehensible, discredited through America's absenteeism from international affairs in the 1920s and 1930s and its catastrophic consequences for the world. Cato's argument for restraint appears as something akin to heresy in its questioning of the wisdom of American indispensability.

While the influential think tanks investigated here usually anchor their geopolitical imagination on the central paradigm of American leadership, the question how this leadership can be sustained and perpetuated into the future can still produce in part starkly different policy recommendations and analyses. These range from how

assertively the United States should react to the rise of China, to the meaning of economic and domestic parameters for the future of American power in the 21st century.

In this context, while not challenging the premise of American leadership altogether, the argument for sustainable security that has been brought forward by such diverse voices as the liberal Center for American Progress and the authors of the Mr. Y article, presents an important caveat on the exclusive focus on U.S. military preeminence and American exceptionalism. Here, the vision of cooperative engagement, sustainable development, economic recovery and domestic renewal in the United States acts as a widening and deepening of the prevailing discourse of national security, moving away from an almost exclusive focus on military power, defense matters and threat perceptions.

This progressive view modifies the established mainstream consensus as represented by Brookings or CNAS, and challenges AEI's neoconservative designs for American primacy, as well as Cato's libertarian vision of restraint. So far however, it seems that the argument for sustainability has had its most significant policy impact in the form of sequestration. It does not seem to have resulted in a more holistic change in political attitudes toward American grand strategy.

Looking at the various policy recommendations by the majority of Washington think tanks, the response to defense budget cuts seems to have been a tweaking and downsizing of America's military supremacy, not a reorientation away from global preeminence. On the Asian pivot, there is a near unanimous endorsement of this

rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region by conservative, centrist and progressive think tanks that only differ in their assessment of how significant the military component of this shift has to be. Both sequestration and the Asian pivot also underline the fundamental importance of the subject of American military power for the political discourse of grand strategy, a complex that will be analyzed more closely in the following chapter.

In their assessment of the Obama administration, most think tanks struggle to define a clearly formulated grand strategy vision that would fit a distinctive label. Given the apparent hybrid character of formal grand strategy discourses identified by the thesis, it seems dubious if such suggestions as ‘soft primacy,’ ‘network centrality,’ or ‘restoration’ will claim the highly coveted title of the new ‘containment’ any time soon. The think tanks’ difficulty in identifying a clear grand strategy under Obama however, corresponds with their inability to present true alternatives for American grand strategy from their own research expertise. Cato, and partially CAP aside, they all offer variations of hegemony, not alternatives to established continuities and conventional narratives. Far from an open exchange of ideas, or probing of innovative approaches to world politics, the discourse of policy advice and research is for the most part a circle of constant repetition and self-reinforcing truisms. The limits of imagination are marked by the unthinkability of ‘isolationism.’ The conventional wisdom that represents American leadership, military supremacy and global power projection as unshakable pillars of U.S. national security policy remains unchallenged inside the Beltway.

6. Strategic Vision: National security, American defense policy and the geopolitics of military preeminence

The United States is the strongest and greatest nation on earth (...). The power and global reach of its military have been an indispensable contributor to world peace and must remain so.¹ – Robert M. Gates

Applying critical insights about the mutual constitution of power/knowledge for the construction of political reality to the investigation of contemporary formulations of American grand strategy, the thesis has so far explored how discourses of popular imagination and formal expertise produce dominant geopolitical visions about America's role in the world. This analysis has established a hegemonic imagination of global leadership as key representation of geopolitical identity that centrally informs grand strategy discourses, from highest grossing films and bestselling books in popular culture to high impact journal articles and the most influential of Washington think tanks in intellectual expert circles.

Within this dominant worldview of national security and geopolitics, images, narratives and ideas about American indispensability and superiority provide a central lens of imagination and interpretation; it is for the most part a debate about how America should lead in the world, not if. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates would sum up this fundamental belief in his memoir, published in 2014: “We are the ‘indispensable nation,’ and few international problems can be addressed successfully without our leadership.”²

¹ Gates, “A Balanced Strategy”, p. 39.

² Robert M. Gates, *Duty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), [*New York Times* best seller, February 2, 2014] p. 591.

In order to further clarify how a discursive perspective of grand strategy can be used to better understand the formulation of U.S. security and foreign policy under the Obama administration, the focus of research will now move into the realm of practical reasoning and policy making to analyze how representations of geopolitical identity are linked to political decisions at the heart of what constitutes the national security apparatus of the United States. As Mamadouh and Dijkink have remarked, practical geopolitics is ‘the domain of policy making and geopolitical reasoning justifying concrete foreign policy actions.’³ In terms of grand strategy, this draws the attention to political actions and policy decisions that have been framed as serving the long-term interest of the United States for national security.

One of the key elements in the practical dimension of grand strategy discourse then is the significance of the concept of American military power for the formulation of U.S. national security policy. It is a generally accepted truth that the United States possesses outstanding military capabilities and an unmatched ability for global power projection. This global geopolitical reach for command and control of geographical (and cyber) space through military power, the ‘command of the commons’ Posen for example defines as the material foundation of U.S. hegemony.⁴ IR scholars, political commentators, media journalists, film producers and policymakers constantly

³ Mamadouh and Dijkink, “Geopolitics, International Relations and Political Geography,” p. 355.

⁴ Posen, “Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony;” as Scheinmann and Cohen have observed, ‘securing the commons’ has become an intertextual fixture of national security dialogue in Washington: “One of the few points of agreement between President Obama’s 2010 *National Security Strategy*, the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, the neoconservative Project for the New America’s Century’s “Rebuilding American Defense” report, various NATO research papers, and numerous think tank publications is that they all emphasize the importance of “safeguarding the global commons.” Gabriel M. Scheinmann and Raphael S. Cohen, “The Myth of ‘Securing the Commons,’” *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2011): p. 115; there is also a strong intellectual link between the idea of U.S. control of the global commons, and classic geopolitical conceptualizations, such as Mackinder’s ‘Heartland,’ or Spykman’s ‘Rimland’ theory, cf. Abraham M. Denmark, “Managing the Global Commons,” *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2010): pp. 165-182; see also Nicholas J. Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007, originally published in 1942 by Harcourt, Brace and Company).

represent American military might as a category that separates the United States from the rest of the world. It is perhaps the most obvious and visible expression of American primacy: a global icon of power and American exceptionalism that permeates popular culture, academic analysis and political discourse.

Viewed from a critical perspective, the representations and practices of U.S. military power are critical to the political discourse of national security and the constitution of arguments for America's global leadership. As such, the planning of defense policy and military strategy is a central element in the practical discourse of grand strategy. The way geopolitical representations are employed to legitimize and authorize political actions in matters of security and defense allow the thesis to explore how American leadership in world politics has been defined or redefined politically under the Obama administration, and how this articulation of military power corresponds or deviates with popular and formal discourse of grand strategy in regard to the categories of hegemony, engagement and restraint established so far.

Thus, this chapter will explore the practical dimension of national security planning, defense policymaking, and military strategy on several levels. First, it will analyze the highest level of policy planning located at the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), commonly referred to as the Pentagon. The DoD is a key discursive producer that regularly translates ideas of grand strategy and geopolitical codes into concrete policy outcomes. Ó Tuathail for example classified the 1995 *National Military Strategy of the United States*, published by the Joint Chiefs, as 'geo-strategic doctrine' that established 'overseas presence' and 'power projection' as key elements

of America's strategic outlook of geopolitical primacy.⁵ In particular, high-level strategic documents such as the *Quadrennial Defense Review* reports or the *Defense Strategic Guidance* are of interest here, together with related official statements and media appearances by the Secretary of Defense or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS). Together they frame a significant part of the political, civilian-military leadership debate about America's future role in international affairs in their roles as key advisors and assistants to the President, and top representatives of the defense establishment. Here, the Secretary of Defense is the 'principal defense policy advisor' to the President, while the JCS chairman acts as the administration's 'senior military advisor.'⁶ In investigating defense policy planning, the thesis will also consider in greater detail the impact of sequestration on defense and the U.S. military, and how this policy issue that is widely debated in Washington is affecting the discourse of military preeminence and U.S. hegemony that has been dominant in political, civilian and military expert circles since the end of the Cold War.

Below the level of general defense policy, the analysis will consider the dimension of military strategy, doctrine, and operational planning, concerned with the practical preparation of the use of armed force by the United States, in particular the apparent shift from a strategic and operational focus on large-scale ground operations with a geographical emphasis on the Middle East and Central Asia, - the counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan -, to a more air and naval oriented focus on the

⁵ Ó Tuathail, "Postmodern Geopolitics? The Modern Geopolitical Imagination and Beyond," in *Rethinking Geopolitics*, p. 32.

⁶ "About the Department of Defense (DOD)," U.S. Department of Defense, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/about/>. Both are also mandatory members of the National Security Council that was established through the National Security Act of 1947. The role of the JCS chairman was further strengthened through the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which elevated his position compared to the individual service chiefs of the Air Force, Navy, Army and Marine Corps, in order to 'present the president a prompt, single, unified military position' on security and defense issues, see Harvey M. Sapolsky, Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge, *U.S. Defense Politics: The origins of security policy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009), p. 54.

Asia-Pacific region as part of the Obama administration's 'pivot' to the region, and the operational concept of Air-Sea Battle. The geopolitical contextualization of America's war fighting strategy will be investigated especially in relation to the expert debate about continued American primacy, greater cooperative engagement, or strategic restraint encountered in the previous chapters.

Finally, the chapter will consider how the U.S. military establishes and adapts the thinking of grand strategy as dominant form of knowledge through its senior educational institutions, in particular at the United States National War College. Here grand strategy is taught to 'groom' future officers for leadership.⁷ The education of future leaders that are being prepared for the highest positions in the national security establishment, joint military command, and general staff functions is an important indicator how the geopolitical imagination about America's role in the world is developed and perpetuated in one of the key institutions that is tasked with executing U.S. policy and protecting American interest abroad. The special emphasis of the military establishment on 'leadership' also serves to further explore this key element of American grand strategy discourse in the practical context of U.S. security and defense.

As this chapter will demonstrate, the various elements of policy making, defense planning, military strategy development and professional senior education suggest a careful reframing of American hegemony in practical discourse that puts greater emphasis on cooperative engagement and restraint, while preserving the United

⁷ Cf., Ervin J. Rourke, "Military education for the new age," in *American Defense Policy*, ed. Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta, and Collins G. Shackelford Jr. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005): pp. 322-326.

States ability to act with superior military force where it is deemed politically necessary in the pursuit of vital national interests. The result is that while still the most visible denominator of global leadership, U.S. military preeminence is simultaneously being downsized and recalibrated toward more regional prioritization, increased collaboration, greater financial sustainability and less ambitious geopolitical goals in U.S. national security policy.

U.S. defense policy planning and the geopolitical vision of American leadership in a multipolar system

The U.S. Department of Defense has been described by Secretary Gates, who served at its head from 2006 until 2011, under both President Bush and Obama, as the ‘largest, most complex organization on the planet.’⁸ Over 1.4 million men and women serve in the American military on active duty, in addition the Pentagon employs 718,000 civilian personnel, making it the ‘nation's largest employer.’⁹ Another 1.1 million serve in the National Guard and Reserve forces. Under President Obama, the Department of Defense had an average annual budget in excess of \$500 billion, \$700 billion if accounting for the supplementary budgets to finance the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, officially named ‘overseas contingency operations.’¹⁰ The DoD oversees American operations and military installations in the entire world and is the principal actor of the U.S. government charged with the execution of security and defense policy. After the President and the White House, the Pentagon is the

⁸ Gates, *Duty*, p. 577.

⁹ “About the Department of Defense (DOD),” U.S. Department of Defense, accessed, May 6, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/about/>.

¹⁰ “Government Spending Chart,” U.S. Government Spending, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.usgovernmentpending.com/spending_chart_2004_2018U.S.r_09s1li11mcn_30f.

most important practitioner of U.S. grand strategy. One of the first significant strategic documents on defense to be released under the Obama administration was the *Quadrennial Defense Review* report (QDR), submitted on February 1, 2010.

The QDR is a congressionally mandated report, requiring the examination of defense strategy and priorities every four years by the Department of Defense. The 2010 QDR emphasized prioritizing America's current conflicts, the engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, marked by asymmetric conflicts, counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism, over planning for potential conflicts with 'near peer' rivals in classic scenarios of conventional war fighting.¹¹ A second focus of the QDR was to reorganize the acquisition and management process at the Pentagon, to allow for greater accountability and efficiency in the allocation of financial resources. This was a first, timid step to reign in ballooning defense expenditures. A concern that would move more and more into the forefront of defense planning over Obama's time in office.

The 2010 QDR anticipates a geopolitical diffusion of political, economic and military power, in particular mentioning the rise of India and China in this context. In this increasingly multipolar international system, 'the United States will remain the most powerful actor but must increasingly work with key allies and partners if it is to sustain stability and peace.'¹² Intertextually, the language of the QDR directly connects in its geopolitical assessment with the popular imagination of multipolarity

¹¹ This resulted in the cancellation of several high-profile weapons programs primarily designed for such conventional conflicts as part of the FY 2010 budget, such as the F-22 air superiority fighter, or the Army's Future Combat System, see Gates, *Duty*, pp. 311-322.

¹² U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010), p. iii.

in Zakaria's *Post-American World*, or Brzezinski's *Strategic Vision*, and the liberal-internationalist analysis of 'mutual indispensability' and 'network centrality' by such authors as Slaughter, Nye and Gelb in *Foreign Affairs*. The assessment that a geopolitical diffusion of power and influence is occurring and that it is modifying the established hegemony of the United States and its global leadership role also seems to represent an intra-governmental consensus among U.S. defense planning and intelligence analysis.

The National Intelligence Council (NIC), an internal government think tank located with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and drawing experts from government, academia, and the private sector, concluded in its 2008 report, titled *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* that a 'global multipolar system is emerging with the rise of China, India, and others.'¹³ According to its mission statement, the NIC is supposed to provide 'long-term strategic analysis' to the intelligence community of the United States and the Director of National Intelligence (DNI).¹⁴ The DNI in turn serves as 'principal advisor' to the President and the National Security Council on intelligence matters related to national security. Compared to the Pentagon, the NIC's intelligence assessment is more candid in its view of a relative decline of U.S. economic and military power, and future

¹³ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, 2008), p. iv. Every four years the NIC publishes an update of its *Global Trends* series that identifies 'key drivers and developments likely to shape world events a couple of decades into the future,' cf., "Global Trends," National Intelligence Council, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-what-we-do>.

¹⁴ "Who we are," National Intelligence Council, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-who-we-are>. The NIC describes its role as: (...) bridge between the intelligence and policy communities, a source of deep substantive expertise on intelligence issues, and a facilitator of Intelligence Community collaboration and outreach, *ibid*. The 'Intelligence Community' (IC) of the United States encompasses a coalition of seventeen different (!) agencies and organizations that are charged with gathering and analyzing 'intelligence necessary to conduct foreign relations and national security activities,' cf., "Intelligence Community," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, accessed April 4, 2014, <http://www.dni.gov/index.php>.

constraints of policy options. In general though, the defense policy planning process under Obama seems to have internalized the idea that the United States is facing the rise of a multipolar system.¹⁵ The text of the 2010 QDR subsequently moves away from the idea of a ‘unipolar moment,’ or the ‘Global War on Terror’ and embraces cooperative engagement as the way forward to secure American leadership in the world.¹⁶

The United States must demonstrate steadfast engagement to address these global challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities. We must display a continued willingness to commit substantial effort to strengthen and reform the international order and, in concert with our allies and partners abroad, engage in cooperative, purposeful action in the pursuit of common interests.¹⁷

Again, this rhetorical shift from primacy to engagement represents a cross-discursive link between political practice and formal expertise, connecting the Pentagon planning process to the expertise of influential Washington think tanks, leading geopolitical experts and prominent IR scholars. As described in the previous chapters, the move to reframe and reformulate American grand strategy under Obama was already set up by the 2009 CNAS report edited by Brimley and Flournoy. Both would both be centrally involved in the formulation of the QDR, most importantly Flournoy, who as under secretary of defense for policy was directly responsible for the development of this policy document.¹⁸ After the publication of the QDR, the geopolitical vision outlined in this key text of practical discourse was flanked and reconfirmed by prominent *Foreign Affairs* articles by both Clinton and Gates, who stressed a new era of ‘building partner capacity’ and ‘smart power.’

¹⁵ *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, p. 93.

¹⁶ In March 2009 the Department of Defense officially changed the name from ‘Global War on Terror’ to ‘Overseas Contingency Operation’ (OCO) to designate its counter-terrorism activities, cf. Scott Wilson and Al Kamen, “‘Global War on Terror’ is given a new name,” *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2009, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html>.

¹⁷ *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2010, p. 5.

¹⁸ Cf., Mark Thompson, “Michèle Flournoy Departs,” *TIME*, December 14, 2011, accessed, April 3, 2014, <http://nation.time.com/2011/12/14/michele-flournoy-departs/>.

Finally, Mead, Ikenberry and Brzezinski, all writing in *Foreign Affairs*, would hail the Obama administration for its vision of ‘engagement’ that seemingly repudiated the unilateralism of the Bush administration.¹⁹

The ‘Bush doctrine’ had expressed a grand strategy vision of military primacy, an expansive agenda for global transformation, preemptive warfare, and an increased willingness to act unilaterally.²⁰ In comparison with key strategic documents of the Bush presidency such as the *National Security Strategy* of 2002 and 2006 or the *National Defense Strategy* of 2008, the 2010 defense review under Obama developed a vision of hegemonic engagement that put greater emphasis on cooperative multilateralism to pursue U.S. interests for ‘security, prosperity, broad respect for universal values, and an international order that promotes cooperative action.’²¹ The previous 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* under Donald Rumsfeld had singled out the United Kingdom and Australia and their military support for the U.S.-led military intervention in Iraq as, ‘models for the breadth and depth of cooperation that the United States seeks to foster with other allies and partners around the world.’²²

The strategic focus had predominantly been on fighting a ‘long war’ under U.S. leadership, with America’s allies as welcome auxiliaries in this globe spanning conflict: “With its allies and partners, the United States must be prepared to wage

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See for example the definition of the ‘Bush doctrine’ in, Gary L. Guertner, “European Views of Preemption in U.S. National Security Strategy,” *The U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection* 5 (2007/2008), accessed March 14, 2014, http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume5/august_2007/8_07_2.html.

²¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2010, p. iv; where the Rumsfeld QDR of 2006 for example mentions ‘allies’ 57 times, the Gates QDR of 2010 nearly doubles this number, mentioning ‘allies’ 107 times; ‘engagement’ on the other hand is not used to describe a strategic priority for defense planning and security cooperation under Rumsfeld, while it features prominently in this role in the 2010 QDR.

²² U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2006), p. 7.

this war in many locations simultaneously and for some years to come.”²³ While both documents frequently mention ‘allies’ and ‘partners’ as cornerstone and necessary foundation of U.S. national security and defense, the Obama QDR of 2010 describes engagement in the context of a much broader geopolitical vision for global cooperation:

The United States cannot sustain a stable international system alone. In an increasingly interdependent world, challenges to common interests are best addressed in concert with likeminded allies and partners who share responsibility for fostering peace and security.²⁴

In the words of the NIC:

(...) the multiplicity of influential actors and distrust of vast power means less room for the U.S. to call the shots without the support of strong partnerships.²⁵

At the same time, this shift towards greater cooperative engagement, compared to the Bush administration’s emphasis on a U.S.-led global agenda for the active promotion of freedom and democracy, and the fight against terrorist extremism, did not signal a departure from American preeminence in military matters:

The United States remains the only nation able to project and sustain large-scale operations over extended distances. This unique position generates an obligation to be responsible stewards of the power and influence that history, determination, and circumstance have provided.²⁶

That greater engagement as element of the Obama defense policy was meant to reformulate American hegemony, not replace it was also well illustrated when Flournoy took a decisive stand against notions of restraint and retrenchment of U.S. military power and its global forward presence in the 2012 *Foreign Affairs* article she co-authored, titled “Obama’s New Global Posture.”²⁷ Far from a radical change,

²³ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2010, p. 57.

²⁵ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, p. xi.

²⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2010, p. v.

²⁷ Flournoy and Davidson, “Obama’s New Global Posture.”

there was a strong continuity in defense policy and the way practical discourse framed the role of the United States and its military power in national security and world politics.

The ‘stewardship of the international system’ the 2010 QDR identified as America’s ongoing and necessary role in the world for example, represents yet another metaphor for U.S. hegemony. In fact, the global ambition and reach of U.S. military power, as outlined in the 2010 QDR, directly linked the grand strategy visions of both Bush and Obama: The unique military capability for power projection remained the foundation of the global leadership role of the United States. As the *Military Strategy of the United States*, published by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and meant to complement the 2010 QDR and achieve its military objectives through the instrument of the Armed Forces described it in 2011:

Leadership is how we exercise the full spectrum of power to defend our national interests and advance international security and stability.²⁸

In terms of the hierarchy of grand strategy policy documents, and the practical formulation of the geopolitical identity of the United States, the Joint Chiefs refer to the *National Security Strategy (NSS)* issued by President Obama in 2010 as the highest level of U.S. security and defense planning that defined ‘our [America’s] enduring national interests.’²⁹ Ultimately, the ends of American grand strategy under Obama, security, economic prosperity, a cooperative international order, and the promotion of universal values are all seen as advancing through continued American

²⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011), p. 1.

²⁹ Ibid., 4. These are described as: “The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners; A strong, innovative and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; Respect for universal values at home and around the world; and An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges;” *ibid.*

hegemony, of which military power is an essential component. The *National Military Strategy of the United States* perfectly folds into this political top-down chain of argumentation for U.S. hegemony in national security, defense policy and military strategy. Describing the NSS as having reaffirmed ‘America’s commitment to retaining its global leadership role,’ it directly relates the global projection of American military power to the geopolitical vision of hegemony the NSS and the QDR set out:

In pursuing these objectives, America’s Joint Force makes critical contributions to U.S. leadership and national security. [...] This requires America’s Joint Force possesses the reach, resolve, and ability to project decisive military power.³⁰

The representations and practices of hegemonic military power, as documented in the *Quadrennial Defense Review* and the *National Military Strategy of the United States* reconfirm the geopolitical vision of hegemony in practical grand strategy discourse, at the same time the global leadership role of the United States provides the rationale for the continued existence and exercise of that power. The result is an argumentative tautology that reproduces itself in practical grand strategy discourse: Because of the superior military power it possesses, the United States is able to lead, because it is an indispensable leader in world affairs, the United States requires superior military power.

This practical rationale however, is far from an isolated self-serving discourse produced by the top level of the military bureaucracy in the Pentagon. As the thesis has demonstrated, the equation of military preeminence, American hegemony and its stated positive effects for regional stability, democracy, and global prosperity is

³⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

widely supported and contributed to by the formally independent expertise from Washington think tanks, from the neoconservative AEI, to the centrist Brookings, CSIS, or CNAS, which all argue to varying degrees for ‘preeminence’ of U.S. military power as stabilizing factor and deterrent of would be aggressors. In IR scholarship, one of the most prominent recent examples is the argument by Brooks, Wohlforth and Ikenberry for ‘deep engagement,’ brought forward in *International Security*, and later in *Foreign Affairs*, which states among other things that America’s ‘military dominance undergirds its economic leadership,’ and that the United States should not adopt a grand strategy of retrenchment and offshore balancing, for risking global instability.³¹

In popular culture, the supremacy of the U.S. military and its historic achievements provided one of the key argument for Robert Kagan’s popular tractate on America as the George Bailey of the international system, the sole possible guarantor of the liberal world order, its military power essential to preserve world order, to ‘shape its norms, uphold its institutions, defend the sinews of its economic system, and keep the peace.’³² This vision of an American supremacy of power likewise underwrote the geopolitical bestsellers by Robert Kaplan or George Friedman and their neo-imperial fantasies of the U.S. president as ‘global emperor,’ or America’s ‘voluntary Romanization.’³³

³¹ Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, “Don’t Come Home, America;” Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, “Lean Forward;” on this realist debate on U.S. grand strategy in IR, also see Craig Campbell, Benjamin H. Friedman, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, and Justin Logan, Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, “Correspondence. Debating American Engagement: The Future of U.S. Grand Strategy,” *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013): pp. 181-199.

³² Kagan, *The World America Made*, p. 139.

³³ Friedman, *The Next Decade*, p. 14; Kaplan, *Revenge of Geography*, pp. 342-344.

And of course with active support from the Pentagon the various cinematic accounts of the United States military heroically defending freedom and democracy against terrorists, alien invaders and super villains firmly embed the notion of military preeminence and U.S. leadership in the popular imagination. However, under the impression of sequestration this hegemonic, geopolitical identity of the United States would have to be reconciled with an increasing emphasis on restraint in security and defense matters. This would in turn further the tension between the political rhetoric and policy practice of American grand strategy discourse.

Superpower under restraint: Sequestration and its impact on defense policy and the military planning of American grand strategy

With the presentation of the 2012 *Defense Strategic Guidance* (DSG) it became clear that greater restraint would enter the highest level of defense policy planning, and would in turn somewhat modify the definition of U.S. hegemony and its military power base. The DSG was released on January 5, 2012 under Obama's second Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who described it as 'reflecting the President's strategic direction to the department.' The *Defense Strategic Guidance* officially adapted, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the standard measure for the global power projection capability of the United States, defined as the ability to fight two wars simultaneously. Instead the standard was reduced to the ability to fight one major war and act defensively against the aggressive aspirations of another actor in a second conflict.³⁴ In addition, U.S. forces would 'no longer be sized to conduct

³⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012), p. 4. The former assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration, and senior fellow at the Center for American Progress Lawrence J. Korb and the

large-scale, prolonged stability operations.’³⁵ The 2012 DSG in effect spelled out a grand strategy of ‘hegemony light.’

At the same time, it was announced that the United States, would in future prioritize its military capabilities in the ‘Asia-Pacific region.’³⁶ This announcement was part of the ‘pivot to Asia’ the Obama administration declared in a concentrated effort in late 2011 and early 2012. The pivot represented a key element of U.S. foreign and security policy discourse and was promoted by several prominent members of the Obama administration in a series of high profile public speeches, media articles, trips abroad, and policy announcements. These included the President himself, Secretary of State Clinton, Secretary of Defense Panetta, and National Security Advisor Thomas Donilon.³⁷ Militarily, one of the results of this strategic shift was that from 2020 onwards the U.S. Navy would have 60% of its forces stationed in the Pacific, compared to a previous rough parity of forces between the Atlantic and the Pacific.³⁸

To offset the impression that the United States was withdrawing, or pivoting away

journalist Mark Thompson have pointed out that the ‘two war’ standard has always been a construct, as demonstrated for example by the inability of the American Armed Forces to simultaneously prioritize Afghanistan and Iraq, see Lawrence J. Korb, “The Right Cuts,” *National Interest*, January 25, 2012, accessed May, 7, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/obamas-overblown-defense-reductions-6379>; Mark Thompson, “The Two-MRC Strategy: Major Regional Contingencies, or Mythical Routine Canards?,” *TIME*, January 4, 2012, accessed, May 7, 2014, <http://nation.time.com/2012/01/04/the-two-mrc-strategy-major-regional-contingencies-or-mythical-routine-canards/>; nonetheless the official abandonment of this established discursive trope of U.S. hegemony and global military preeminence in favor of a more limited imagination of the military role and geopolitical ambition of the United States remains a significant element in practical grand strategy discourse.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, p. 6.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁷ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011, accessed March 11, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century; Tom Donilon, “America is Back in the Pacific and will Uphold the Rules,” *Financial Times*, November 27, 2011, accessed March 11, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4f3febac-1761-11e1-b00e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2v1VeZcC4>; Barack Obama, “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament,” November 17, 2011, accessed March 11, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

³⁸ Further military components of the ‘pivot’ include increased training exercises of the United States with ‘allies’ and ‘partners’, such as Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines, as well as the stationing of U.S. Marines in Australia, cf., Leon Panetta, “Speech delivered at the Shangri-La Security Dialogue,” June 2, 2012, accessed April 07, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1681>. Secretary of Defense Panetta who described the United States as a ‘Pacific power,’ ended his speech in Singapore, in which he outlined the military measures of the United States’ rebalancing to the region with the words: “We were there then, we are here now, and we will be here for the future.”, *ibid.*

from the Middle East and Europe, the ‘pivot’ was later renamed ‘rebalancing’ in official statements.³⁹ This retrenchment however, seems already underway in parts, considering the removal of heavy U.S. combat troops from Germany, the limited U.S. involvement over Libya, or the absence of American military action in response to chemical weapons attacks in Syria.⁴⁰ With the 2012 DSG the United States engaged in a geopolitical realignment, which prioritized one particular region, the Asia-Pacific, over others in the long-term orientation of national security policy.

This strategic downsizing and rebalancing documented that under Obama defense policy would to some degree redefine the meaning of U.S. military preeminence and subsequently of America’s global hegemony in general. This was largely undertaken under the impression that the United States was facing a mounting debt crisis, and in context with increased political efforts to reign in federal spending, including on defense. In his opening remarks in the DSG document, titled *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* President Obama first focused on ending America’s conflicts after 9/11, the end of the War in Iraq, putting ‘al-Qa’ida on the path to defeat,’ and the transition in Afghanistan to Afghan responsibility.⁴¹ Directly after, he referred to the Budget Control Act of 2011, and the need to reduce defense spending, in order to ‘renew our long-term economic strength.’⁴²

³⁹ Cf., David Brewster, “‘Asian pivot’ is really an ‘Asian re-balance’,” *The Interpreter*, June 22, 2013, accessed April 07, 2014, <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/06/22/asian-pivot-is-really-an-asian-rebalance.aspx?COLLCC=3789963749&>.

⁴⁰ In this context, see also the analysis by Ted Galen Carpenter, “U.S. Security Retrenchment: The First Effects of a Modest Shift,” *Cato*, March 17, 2014, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-security-retrenchment-first-effects-modest-shift>, and Stephen Metz, “A Receding Presence: The Military Implications of American Retrenchment,” *World Politics Review*, October 22, 2013, pp. 9-14.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, cover letter.

⁴² *Ibid.*

As an assessment by the Congressional Research Service stated, the strategy review leading up to the DSG was initiated by the President in April 2011, in order to identify \$400 billion in additional savings in the defense budget as part of a broader effort to achieve \$4 trillion in deficit reduction over 12 years.⁴³ As Stuart Kaufman has commented, defense spending is the ‘material base’ for grand strategy.⁴⁴ Changes to the size and trajectory of defense spending would affect the practical policy discourse on strategy and defense planning over the course of Obama’s first term and beyond.

In the words of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Martin E. Dempsey: “Cost has reemerged as an independent variable in the U.S. national security equation.”⁴⁵ From a critical perspective however, it is not primarily the correlation between money as material input and grand strategy as output that is relevant, but rather how the representation of cost and debt, affected the discourse of national security, and how it changed existing paradigms of grand strategy thinking, and established practices in defense policy.

As Secretary Gates has noted in his memoirs, while in 2009, 2010 and 2011 defense budgets were largely unaffected by cuts, the 2012 budget was the first under President Obama to see a significant reduction in the growth of defense spending.⁴⁶ With the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the onset of sequestration in 2013 the

⁴³ Catherine Dale and Pat Towell, *In Brief: Assessing the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG)*, (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), p. 2.

⁴⁴ Stuart J. Kaufman, “U.S. National Strategy from Bush to Obama: Continuity and Change,” in *National Security under the Obama Administration*, eds. Bahram M. Rajee and Mark J. Miller (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 13.

⁴⁵ Martin E. Dempsey, “From the Chairman,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 66 (3rd quarter 2012), p. 2.

⁴⁶ Gates, *Duty*, pp. 459-465

Pentagon would ultimately face a reduction in previously planned defense spending levels of about \$1 trillion over ten years compared to original estimates.⁴⁷

While even after these reductions the United States would maintain by far the largest single defense budget in the world, the 2012 *Defense Strategic Guidance* was a signifier that a new era of restraint would succeed the post-9/11 decade of ever increasing defense expenditures and ambitious military interventions. In fact, the DSG itself did not yet account for the possibility of sequestration, which senior officials in the Pentagon claimed would ‘break’ the new defense strategy.⁴⁸ When it became clear that sequestration would in all likelihood become a political and fiscal reality, the Department of Defense would seek to further develop the strategic course of restraint the 2012 defense strategy had set out. A Strategic Choices and Management Review (SCMR) was conducted by the DoD in 2013 under the new Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel that would further explore options for cutting costs. The 2014 QDR was then designed to build upon and update the 2012 guideline, and its vision of American leadership in an ‘age of austerity.’⁴⁹ As part of the Pentagon budget proposal for 2015, Hagel announced further cuts to American Armed Forces, bringing the U.S. Army down to its ‘smallest number of troops since before the Second World War,’ as it was widely reported.⁵⁰ This cautious and limited

⁴⁷ See, Lawrence J. Korb, Max Hoffman, and Kate Blakely, “Hagel’s Defense Cuts: A Good Idea,” *The National Interest*, April 30, 2014, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/hagels-defense-cuts-good-idea-10322>.

⁴⁸ Quoted in, Dale and Towell, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Cf., Catherine Dale, *The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and Defense Strategy: Issues for Congress* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014).

⁵⁰ As part of the Pentagon budget proposal for fiscal year (FY) 2015, the U.S. Army will be cut from current levels of 520,000 soldiers to between 450,000 and 440,000 soldiers, and the active-duty Marine Corps will be reduced to about 182,000, see Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall, “DoD Budget Request Adapts to Fiscal Realities, Hagel says,” *American Forces Press Service*, March 6, 2014, accessed March 13, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121784>; David Alexander, “Big budget cuts pose ‘tough, tough choices’ for Pentagon: Hagel,” *Reuters*, March 6, 2014, accessed March 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/06/us-usa-defense-budget-idU.S.BREA2500W20140306>; should sequestration levels stay in place after 2016, the numbers of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps are scheduled

reduction nonetheless produced a foreseeable and widespread outcry against President Obama's 'weakening' of U.S. military power, his acceptance of incalculable risk in a dangerous world of ever growing threats, and the demise of America's historic primacy in conservative circles of the foreign and security policy establishment.⁵¹

The 2012 DSG also again put a strong emphasis on engagement, echoing the focus of the 2010 QDR. Calling repeatedly for continued efforts to work with allies, the document stressed that: "Building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership."⁵² In his cover letter to the *Defense Strategic Guidance*, President Obama referred to military operations in Libya to illustrate this vision of 'burden-sharing.'⁵³ As Obama also pointed out however, any fiscal constraint on U.S. military capabilities would not question the established geopolitical identity of the United States:

(...) we will keep our Armed Forces the best-trained, best-led, best equipped fighting force in history. [...] in a changing world that demands our leadership, the United States of America will remain the greatest force for freedom and security the world has ever known.⁵⁴

to drop further, to levels of 420.000 and 175.000 respectively, together with the retirement of an air craft carrier, and further cuts to the numbers of U.S. ships and airplanes, see Lawrence J. Korb, Max Hoffman, and Kate Blakeley, *A User's Guide to the Fiscal Year 2015 Defense Budget* (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2014). Sequestration is ultimately opposed by the Pentagon and the Obama administration, and the U.S. Department of Defense's budget planning process currently only has adapted to budget caps for the fiscal year 2015. As Korb, Hoffman, and Blakeley argue, the department still hopes: "(...) if it can just weather this short-term budgetary storm, it can avoid adjusting its long-term plans to reflect existing fiscal realities;" *ibid*, p. 1.

⁵¹ See for example, Dov Zakheim, "A budget strategy that courts disaster," *Foreign Policy*, January 5, 2012, accessed May 7, 2014, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/05/a_budget_strategy_that_courts_disaster; Arthur Herman, "America's Disarmed Future," *National Review Online*, January 6, 2012, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/287320/america-s-disarmed-future-arthur-herman>; Gary Schmitt and Tom Donnelly, "No Superpower Here," Center for Defense Studies, January 9, 2012, accessed, May 7, 2014, <http://www.defensestudies.org/cds/no-superpower-here/>.

⁵² U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, p. 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, cover letter.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

As with the greater emphasis on cooperative engagement compared to Bush, restraint would modify the articulation of U.S. grand strategy, but not replace the imagination of American leadership, global hegemony and military preeminence that lies at its center. The highest civilian and military representatives of the United States regularly frame U.S. military power as a force whose superiority is unparalleled in history, and whose necessity is beyond doubt in a world of ever increasing risks that is presented as beyond everything the United States has faced in the past. As Secretary Hagel recently stated during a Senate hearing about the future of defense spending:

The United States of America possesses the most lethal, strongest, most powerful military today in the history of the world. We will continue to have that kind of a military. We need that kind of a military to protect our interests.⁵⁵

The Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, perfectly illustrated the inflationary use of the rhetoric of geopolitical volatility, existential threat and mounting risks abroad during another Senate hearing on U.S. intelligence: "I have not experienced a time when we have been beset by more crises and threats around the globe."⁵⁶ And General Dempsey informed the Senate Armed Service Committee: "I will personally attest to the fact that [the world is] more dangerous than it has ever been."⁵⁷ As Micah Zenko succinctly summed up this statement:

Dempsey argues that we are not merely living in the most dangerous moment since his birth in 1952, but since the earth was formed 4.54 billion years ago.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Quoted in, U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Department of Defense Authorization of Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015 and the Future Years Defense Program*, March 5, 2014, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/download/hearing_03-05-14-a, p. 61.

⁵⁶ "Transcript: Senate Intelligence hearing on national security threats," *Washington Post*, January 29, 2014, accessed May 5, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/transcript-senate-intelligence-hearing-on-national-security-threats/2014/01/29/b5913184-8912-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267_story.html.

⁵⁷ Quoted in, Micah Zenko, "Most. Dangerous. World. Ever.," *Foreign Policy*, February 26, 2013, accessed May 7, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/02/26/most_dangerous_world_ever.

⁵⁸ Cf., *ibid.*

Given the real possibility of a thermo-nuclear war with the Soviet Union for more than fifty years, the debacle of the Vietnam War with its millions of dead and wounded, or the experience of 9/11, to name but a few, this institutionalized, hyperbolic rhetoric of threat and fear seems not only out of place, but it can easily be identified as predominantly motivated by bureaucratic interests. The aim is to politically secure continued resources to fund a grand strategy of American hegemony, and the intelligence and military assets that come with it. This practical reasoning that is supposedly rooted in a careful appreciation of facts, and the rational analysis of international trends by seasoned experts and hardnosed strategists is then frequently reproduced and reconfirmed in formal and popular discourses, in think tank reports and research articles, in media commentaries and statements by congressional leaders, by popular book authors and movie producers, cementing it as a dominant world view and perception of geopolitical reality.

Only rarely is there a critical reflection and investigation into these claims in the mainstream discourse of American grand strategy, as for example in the ‘Clear and Present Safety’ article in *Foreign Affairs* by Micah Zenko and Michael Cohen.⁵⁹ As Robert Golan-Vilella has suggested, one of the results of this ‘threat inflation’ in geopolitical imagination might be that when polled on national security issues, American citizens tend to understate the actual dimension of the military power of the United States, and overstate perceived risks and threats, such as the belief that Iran is already in possession of nuclear weapons.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Zenko and Cohen, “Clear and Present Safety.”

⁶⁰ Robert Golan-Vilella, “The Results of Threat Inflation,” *The National Interest*, March 1, 2013, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-results-threat-inflation-8175>. A 2010 CNN poll found that 71 percent of Americans believe that Iran currently has nuclear weapons, a separate CNN poll in 2012 indicated that Americans believe that the threat from Iran is on par with the danger presented by the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s, cf., *ibid*.

The rhetoric of military preeminence and individual defense measures undertaken in context with the pivot testifies to the fact that the United States under Obama was determined to maintain a strong and growing military presence in a region that was defined as being of vital geostrategic importance for the future of U.S. political, economic and security interests. Still, the limited discursive shift in the framing of grand strategy within Obama's first term from 2010 to 2012 testifies to a larger reorientation of the strategic focus of United States defense policy. While winning the 'Long War' against terrorism and extremism dominated the language of the Rumsfeld QDR in 2006, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were still at the forefront of the Gates QDR of 2010, the 2014 QDR, submitted by the new Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel made it clear that 'fiscal austerity' had become the central focus of strategic planning at the Pentagon:

(...) the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is principally focused on preparing for the future by rebalancing our defense efforts in a period of increasing fiscal constraint.⁶¹

The high-level documents on defense policy and strategic planning submitted under President Obama suggest that the Obama administration continues to adhere to the central representation of American exceptionalism and global leadership, necessitated by a ever more volatile world of risks and threats. At the same time, the practice of defense policy is increasingly motivated by the concern for the sustainability of the United States fiscal situation, and subsequently engages in a careful restraining of defense expenditures and limited downsizing of military capabilities.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense , 2014), p. iv.

As a result, there is growing divide between grand strategy rhetoric and practice. As a 2012 CRS report remarked, the DSG would underscore ‘the unique global leadership role of the United States’, but not define the ‘scope or scale’ of this leadership.⁶² This incoherence in strategic defense planning, between continued hegemonic aspirations and increasingly limited means would be replicated on the level of operational military thinking, where the ‘pivot to Asia’ would prove to be more rhetorical than practical.

From COIN to Air-Sea Battle: The geopolitics of military strategy

In January 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta remarked that the United States saw itself ‘at a turning point after a decade of war.’⁶³ A metaphor also frequently used by President Obama.⁶⁴ A result of this turning point has been that the capability for global power projection, the military definition of U.S. hegemony is adapted and modified under the Obama presidency. The United States is ending its decade-long, large-scale combat operations in the Middle East and Central Asia and the experience of America engaging in militarily enforced regime change and counter-insurgency is not likely to be repeated anytime soon. As Secretary Gates told an audience of Army cadets in a speech at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 2011:

⁶² Dale and Towell, p. 3.

⁶³ Leon Panetta, “Statement on Defense Strategic Guidance,” January 5, 2012, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1643>.

⁶⁴ ‘The tide of war is receding’ was an image President Obama used in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly in New York on September 21, 2011, referring to the drawdown of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, see Donna Mills, “Obama: Tide of War Receding at ‘Crossroads of History’,” *American Forces Press Service*, September 21, 2011, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=65402>; during his second inaugural address on January 21, 2013, the President explained that ‘a decade of war is now ending,’ Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address by President Barack Obama,” January 21, 2013, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama>.

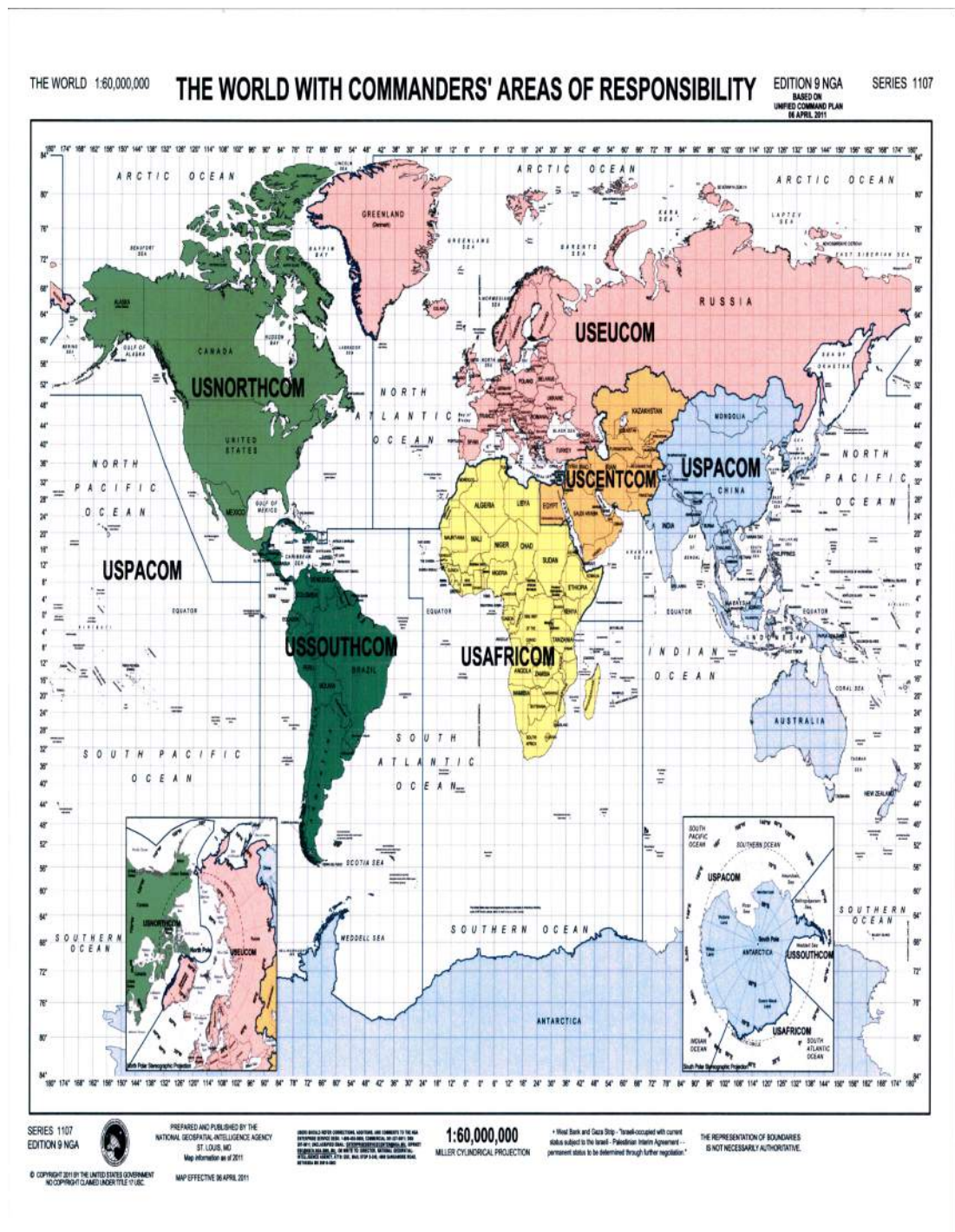
In my opinion, any future defense secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa should 'have his head examined (...)'⁶⁵

This rebalancing of defense policy would have both geopolitical and institutional implications. The U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps, the principal instruments of land warfare, and thus the tools necessary for occupying foreign territory, are being downsized, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force are largely being maintained at current levels. This reflects a renewed geopolitical interest in the Asia-Pacific region that is largely perceived as a 'naval theater,' and which, under the 'Unified Command Plan' of the U.S. Department of Defense lies under the responsibility of the United States Pacific Command.⁶⁶ The United States military is leaving behind 'COIN' and the Middle East, and is getting ready for 'Air-Sea Battle' (ASB) in the Pacific.

⁶⁵ Quoted in, Tom Shanker, "Warning Against Wars Like Iraq and Afghanistan," *New York Times*, February 25, 2011, accessed May 7, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/26/world/26gates.html?_r=0.

⁶⁶ The command structure of the U.S. military is divided into six geographic and three functional Unified Combatant Commands (UCC), unifying all assigned forces under one central hierarchy, with the respective Combatant Commander directly responsible to the Secretary of Defense and the President. This globe spanning system of military 'command and control' is in itself a powerful representation of the hegemony of the United States. In this global, geospatially divided command structure of the U.S. military, the 'Asia-Pacific' falls under the responsibility of U.S. Pacific Command (U.S. PACOM), headquartered on Oahu, Hawaii, also the headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. U.S. PACOM describes its 'area of responsibility' (AOR) as 'stretching from the waters off the west coast of the U.S. to the western border of India, and from Antarctica to the North Pole.' "U.S. PACOM Facts", United States Pacific Command, accessed April 22, 2014, <http://www.pacom.mil/about-uspacom/facts.shtml>. The United States maintains considerable military forces in the region: U.S. military and civilian personnel assigned to U.S.PACOM number approximately 330,000, or about one-fifth of total U.S. military strength. U.S. Pacific Fleet consists of approximately 180 ships (including five aircraft carrier strike groups), nearly 2,000 aircraft, and 140,000 Sailors and civilians. Marine Corps Forces Pacific includes two Marine Expeditionary Forces and about 85,000 personnel assigned. U.S. Pacific Air Forces is comprised of approximately 43,000 airmen and more than 435 aircraft. U.S. Army Pacific has more than 60,000 personnel assigned, including five Stryker brigades, *ibid*.

Fig. 17 The United States ‘Unified Command Plan’⁶⁷



COIN, or counter-insurgency as a military strategy to achieve victory in asymmetrical conflicts rose to prominence under a group of so-called ‘warrior scholars’ that sought to redefine America’s war fighting ability in the post-9/11

⁶⁷ “Unified Command Plan,” U.S. Department of Defense, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.defense.gov/news/UCP_2011_Map4.pdf.

environment.⁶⁸ One of the strategy's key texts was the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps field manual FM 3-24 of 2006, co-authored by U.S. Army General David Petraeus and U.S. Marine Corps General James F. Amos. COIN called for the military to concentrate not just on fighting and the elimination of enemies, but to follow a broader political, social and economic approach toward armed insurrection. The protection of civilian populations, the targeting of insurgency leaders, and support for a legitimate host-nation government were all counted as part of this comprehensive strategy. FM 3-24 stated that: "(...) COIN operations always demand considerable expenditures of time and resources."⁶⁹ COIN later became almost synonymous with U.S. military strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also with the immense financial burden and considerable military and civilian resources necessary to undertake operations that simultaneously were aimed at providing security, economic assistance, and development for local populations in conflict zones, in order to achieve a stable political environment.⁷⁰

Furthermore, it seems that neither in Iraq nor in Afghanistan counter-insurgency could produce the lasting stability the U.S. military claimed it would provide. Two names in particular were associated with COIN in Obama's first term: The first is General David Petraeus, who served as U.S. commander in Iraq from 2007 to 2008 and later as combatant commander of U.S. Central Command from 2008 to 2010, the military command in charge of all American forces in the Middle East and Central Asia. The second is General Stanley McChrystal, who served as U.S. commander in

⁶⁸ See for example, Adam Entous and Phil Stewart, "Exclusive: The warrior-scholar versus the Taliban," *Reuters*, June 25, 2010, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/25/us-petraeus-idU.S.TRE65O0R820100625>;

⁶⁹ U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps, *Counter-Insurgency Field Manual* (New York: Cosimo, 2006), p. 24.

⁷⁰ Cf., Karl W. Ikenberry, "The limits of counter-insurgency in Afghanistan: The Other side of the COIN," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2013): pp. 59-74.

Afghanistan from 2009 to 2010. Both defined counter-insurgency as only possible strategy for the United States to ‘win’ in Afghanistan, the conflict that would take center stage in national security policy during Obama’s first term.⁷¹ As Professor Bacevich has remarked in an interview with the author, both Petraeus and McChrystal have since been somewhat discredited, and it seems so has COIN as defining military strategy for the United States in the 21st century.⁷² As the *Washington Post* wrote on March 4, 2014:

In Washington, among policymakers, the Afghan war is increasingly discussed with exasperation, like a curse. It is the type of warfare the United States must avoid at all cost, President Obama argued during his State of the Union address.⁷³

The journalist Bob Woodward reported in 2010, in his *New York Times* bestselling book *Obama’s Wars* that President Obama and the White House felt frequently pressured by Petraeus, McChrystal and the military leadership to endorse a COIN strategy for Afghanistan, and to agree to a significant troop surge in the fall of 2009, which would ultimately result in the political decision for 30.000 additional American troops to be sent to the country.

The conflict over COIN revealed an at times strenuous civil-military relationship in the first term of the Obama administration. COIN in Afghanistan seems to have been a largely military driven strategy that while politically supported by the President,

⁷¹ Cf., Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*.

⁷² Interview with Andrew Bacevich by Georg Löffmann, May 22, 2013. Petraeus had to resign as CIA director in 2012 over an extramarital affair, which was discovered in the course of an FBI investigation. McChrystal was fired as ISAF commander by President Obama in 2010 due to derogatory comments he and members of his staff had made about members of the Obama team, in particular Vice-President Biden in an article that appeared in *Rolling Stone* magazine, see Michael Hastings, “The Runaway General,” *Rolling Stone*, June 22, 2010, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-runaway-general-20100622>. This had been the first time a U.S. President had relieved a wartime commander of his duty since President Truman had fired General MacArthur for insubordination during the Korean War. On the strains in civilian-military relations over the Afghanistan War, and the McChrystal affair, see also Michael Hastings, *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America’s War in Afghanistan*. (New York: Penguin Group, 2012).

⁷³ Ernesto Londoño, “The last casualties: As a long war ends, risks still prove real,” *Washington Post*, March 4, 2014, accessed may 5, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-last-casualties-as-a-long-war-ends-risks-still-prove-real/2014/03/04/55905998-8a90-11e3-a5bd-844629433ba3_story.html.

was never framed by Obama in terms of his central grand strategy vision for the United States.⁷⁴ The ‘pivot to Asia’ the Obama administration announced in 2011 and 2012 however, seems to represent a far more central element of President Obama’s vision about America’s long-term interest and future geopolitical trajectory.⁷⁵ Obama emphasized this during his November 2011 address to the Australian Parliament in Canberra:

As we consider the future of our armed forces, we've begun a review that will identify our most important strategic interests and guide our defense priorities and spending over the coming decade. [...] As we end today's wars, I have directed my national security team to make our presence and mission in the Asia Pacific a top priority.⁷⁶

The abandonment of COIN and downsizing of the Army and the Marine Corps, and the discursive framing of the ‘pivot’ and the prioritization of the Navy and Air Force in the 2012 *Defense Strategic Guidance* seem to support this strategic rebalancing. As a consequence, and in line with the 2012 guidance, the Air-Sea Battle concept would increasingly become the focus of future military operational planning under President Obama.⁷⁷ Air-Sea Battle first entered the policy discourse of grand strategy with the *Quadrennial Defense Review* of 2010 that stated:

The Air Force and Navy together are developing a new joint air-sea battle concept for defeating adversaries across the range of military operations, including adversaries equipped with sophisticated anti-access and area denial capabilities.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Gates for example has commented in his memoirs that he had the impression that Obama framed the Afghanistan conflict predominantly in terms of ‘exit paths,’ and ‘drawdowns,’ but far less in terms of ‘success,’ or ‘accomplishing the mission,’ see Gates, *Duty*, pp. 298-299.

⁷⁵ In September 2011, writing in *Foreign Policy* then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had announced ‘America’s Pacific Century,’ declaring that: “(...) there should be no doubt that America has the capacity to secure and sustain our global leadership in this century as we did in the last;” Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century.” Beyond a familiar reiteration of America’s global hegemony as unwavering historic continuity Clinton’s article described the ‘pivot to Asia’ as a substantially increased investment by the United States, diplomatically, militarily, and economically in the Asia-Pacific, a grand strategy designed to secure America’s lasting preeminence in the region, and American leadership in the world, cf., *ibid*.

⁷⁶ President Obama, “Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament.”

⁷⁷ Cf., Jaffe, “U.S. model for a future war fans tensions with China and inside Pentagon.”

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2010.

In August 2011, the Pentagon announced the establishment of an Air-Sea Battle Office to coordinate related policies in the department. Air-Sea Battle essentially envisions a potential challenge to U.S. hegemony in Asia, and to a lesser degree in the Middle East.⁷⁹ It is assumed that the improvement and proliferation of advanced military technological capabilities, in particular conventional and nuclear submarines, satellites, long-range fighters, stealth, drones, and ballistic missile systems could endanger U.S. military installations and naval assets, and offset the traditional advantage conventional U.S. forces have enjoyed in the past.⁸⁰ These ‘A2/AD’ capabilities could prohibit American access to and movement within a region, and are in particular attributed to the growing military clout of China in Asia.⁸¹ As the *Military Strategy of the United States* explained in its segment on regional security in the Asia-Pacific:

To safeguard U.S. and partner nation interests, we will be prepared to demonstrate the will and commit the resources needed to oppose any nation’s actions that jeopardize access to and use of the global commons and cyberspace, or that threaten the security of our allies.⁸²

Since the uninhibited projection of military power and command of the ‘global commons’ are viewed as the essential foundation of America’s leadership role and cornerstone of its security and defense strategy, ‘A2/AD’ is perceived as a potential threat to U.S. interests, and challenge to American grand strategy. In response, Air-Sea Battle envisions the ‘ability to conduct operational maneuver from strategic distances—that is, the ability to project dominant military force across transoceanic ranges.’⁸³ As the Center for Strategic and Budget Assessments (CSBA) has defined

⁷⁹ Cf., Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010)

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 13-25.

⁸² Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Strategy of the United States*, p. 13.

⁸³ Undersecretary of the Navy Robert O. Work, “AirSea Battle: Power Projection in the Mature Guided Munitions Era.” In *AIE Counter A2/AD Conference*, Washington DC, October 26, 2010, p. 26.

‘Air-Sea Battle,’ it should help ‘set the conditions at the operational level to sustain a stable, favorable conventional military balance throughout the Western Pacific region.’⁸⁴

As the *Washington Post* has reported, one of the key figures behind Air-Sea Battle is the futurist Andrew Marshall who has developed the concept for over twenty years at the Pentagon’s Office of Net Assessment (ONA).⁸⁵ In essence, the ONA is the Pentagon’s equivalent to the NIC, an internal research and analysis organization, tasked with developing a long-term strategic outlook for U.S. national security and defense matters in support of political decision-making and operational planning. It enjoys wide admiration for its grand strategy proficiency among the defense policy establishment, and in particular the Washington think tank scene, where it is seen as much needed antithesis to the un-strategic, short-term crisis reaction mode associated with conventional politics in Washington.

Subsequently, grand strategy and security experts reacted with anger and protest to rumors in 2013 that the organization might be closed due to budget cuts.⁸⁶ As Thomas M. Skypek explained, writing in defense of the ONA in the *National Interest*, a leading American foreign affairs journal:

Its contributions are significant and numerous: it positioned the United States for victory in the Cold War [...]; foresaw the revolution of information warfare and [...]; and highlighted the challenges that a rising, assertive China will pose.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Jan van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budget Assessments, 2010), p. xi.

⁸⁵ Jaffe, “U.S. model for a future war fans tensions with China and inside Pentagon.”

⁸⁶ Peter W. Singer, “Bad Idea for the Pentagon's Idea Shop,” *Brookings*, October 29, 2013, accessed April 04, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/10/29-bad-idea-for-pentagons-office-of-net-assessment-singer>.

⁸⁷ Thomas M. Skypek, “In Defense of Net Assessment,” *National Interest*, November 16, 2013, accessed April 05, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/defense-net-assessment-9411>.

The development of Air-Sea Battle and the celebration of the ONA and its visionary abilities for strategic insight also document how, aside from the mantra of leadership, there exists something akin to a cult of grand strategy in Washington DC, where the elite discourse of national security and defense policy is fixated on the indispensability of strategy and the essential insight of the strategist in guiding the national interest over the long term.

Marshall and the Office of Net Assessment apparently have established a wide network of supporters among the Department of Defense, think tanks, Congress and the defense industry for Air-Sea Battle.⁸⁸ A key supporter for example is the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, who published its first reports on the subject of Air-Sea Battle in 2010.⁸⁹ Andrew Krepinevich, the think tank's president, who authored this first report for CSBA also strongly advocated this strategy in his articles for *Foreign Affairs* as described in chapter five.⁹⁰

The framing of Air-Sea Battle between policy makers, military officials and civilian experts as an operational concept of fundamental strategic importance for the long-term security of the United States, in addition with popular reflections of naval warfare in the Pacific in the movie *Battleship* perfectly illustrate how geopolitical

⁸⁸ Cf., Jaffe, "U.S. model for a future war fans tensions with China and inside Pentagon." The strong support for the Office of Net Assessment among the security policy establishment, and its apparent reputation for visionary grand strategy thinking was also underlined when the Chairman of the Armed Services seapower subcommittee Randy Forbes wrote to Secretary Hagel in October 2013, in response to rumors that the Pentagon was planning to shut down the think tank. Forbes wrote: "Given the critical contributions to U.S. national security made by the office during its forty-year history and its role as a central repository for long-range strategic thinking, we believe it would be a serious error to further consider its abolition;" quoted in Marcus Weisgerber and John T. Bennett, "Pentagon Determining Fate of Revered Net Assessment Office," *Defense News*, October 15, 2013, accessed April 04, 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131015/DEFREG02/310150031/Pentagon-Determining-Fate-Revered-Net-Assessment-Office>.

⁸⁹ Cf., Krepinevich, *Why AirSea Battle?*; van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure*.

⁹⁰ Krepinevich, "The Pentagon's Wasting Assets;" Krepinevich, "Strategy in a Time of Austerity."

visions of grand strategy are built and established as dominant knowledge and generally accepted truth through the intertextual links between practical, formal and popular discourses. In the relatively short time between 2010 and 2012 Air-Sea Battle emerged from the sidelines of military-operational thinking to a key feature of geopolitical imagination on U.S. national security in military strategy documents, think tank reports, journal articles, press statements, conference presentations, public speeches, and even a major Hollywood movie.

At the same time though, as a military-operational element of grand strategy practice, Air-Sea Battle seems to combine efforts to maintain the regional hegemony the United States enjoys in military matters with elements of a realist offshore balancing approach. So far, the ‘pivot,’ or rebalancing did not result in a significant military buildup of the United States in Japan or South Korea, the traditional locations for the forward presence of the U.S. in the region, regularly identified as the foundation of its hegemonic position. Instead, the United States sent two Littoral Combat Ships (LCSs) to Singapore, and announced the deployment of 2,500 Marines to Darwin in Australia, ‘off-shore’ locations in the geopolitical logic of realist balance-of-power calculations as described by Walt, Mearsheimer, or Layne. This in turn gave rise to criticisms of the pivot as being merely ‘rhetoric’ from circles that envision a stronger American military presence in the region and that demand a decisive confirmation of American military primacy in Asia, as for example documented by AEI. As even General Dempsey has acknowledged, from a military point of view: “For now, this shift in focus is more about thinking than it is doing.”⁹¹

⁹¹ Dempsey, “From the Chairman,” p. 3.

Thus, the concept of Air-Sea Battle and its implementation under Obama seem to entail yet another articulation of the contradiction between geopolitical representations and security practices in dominant discourses of American grand strategy. One of the key problems for Air-Sea battle is that while American officials stress that the pivot is not designed to contain China, the military focus of this strategy is clearly on the perceived threat potential of the People's Republic and its rising defense budgets. As a senior Navy official has remarked:

We want to put enough uncertainty in the minds of Chinese military planners that they would not want to take us on. [...] Air-Sea Battle is all about convincing the Chinese that we will win this competition.⁹²

However, characterizing Air-Sea Battle as a military containment strategy, and thus framing it exclusively in terms of maintaining American hegemony in the region would jeopardize efforts of the Obama administration to seek continued engagement and an improved cooperative relationship with China. As President Obama has remarked in February 2012:

(...) I have always emphasized that we welcome China's peaceful rise that we believe that a strong and prosperous China is one that can help to bring stability at prosperity to the region and to the world. And we expect to be able to continue on the cooperative track that we've tried to establish over the last three years.⁹³

At the same time, the fiscal constraints on future U.S. defense spending and military planning are seen as potentially undermining the credibility of the pivot, both domestically and abroad, even more so with the full impact of sequestration yet having to materialize.⁹⁴ Furthermore, it seems that the reticence of the United States to get involved militarily, first in Syria and over the Russian annexation of Crimea,

⁹² Jaffe, "U.S. model for a future war fans tensions with China and inside Pentagon."

⁹³ Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama and Vice President Xi of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting," February 14, 2012, accessed March 13, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/14/remarks-president-obama-and-vice-president-xi-peoples-republic-china-bil>.

⁹⁴ Cf., Congressional Research Service, *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Toward Asia* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), pp. 9-10.

has in turn cast further doubt over the credibility of the pivot and American regional security guarantees among political elites in Asia.⁹⁵ An impression President Obama deliberately tried to counter during an Asia trip in April 2014, that both underscored America's established alliances, with visits to Japan and South Korea, and signaled the pivot's emphasis on developing partnerships, highlighting through increased U.S. cooperation with the Philippines and Malaysia.⁹⁶

In the context of grand strategy the military aspect of the Asian pivot is caught in an unresolved tension between the ambition to maintain America's regional hegemony, fiscal constraints that seem better suited to realist approach of offshore balancing, and the continued desire of the United States to develop China into a 'responsible stakeholder' for the cooperative management of security and economic affairs in the Asia-Pacific. Perhaps owing to this conundrum, in terms of military strategy, Air-Sea Battle has so far had only limited operational impact.

As explored in the previous chapter, this undecided nature of the pivot has been frequently observed among leading Washington think tanks and it contributes to the difficulties security experts seem to have in assigning a distinct label to the grand strategy of President Obama. However, if we consider the realm of professional military education of national security and grand strategy, it seems that in the U.S. military there is a much greater appreciation for the dynamic nature of strategic thinking and practice, and openness for the adaptability of strategic concepts of

⁹⁵ A recent article in *Foreign Policy* for example remarked how Japanese leaders and scholars saw American passivity over Syria and Ukraine as having damaged American credibility in Asia, see Will Inboden, "When Asian Leaders See Obama, They See Syria and Ukraine," *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2014, accessed May 7, 2014, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/04/23/obama_should_be_thinking_about_kennan_this_week.

⁹⁶ Mark Landler, "Ending Asia Trip, Obama Defends His Foreign Policy," *The New York Times*, April 28, 2014, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/29/world/obama-defends-foreign-policy-against-critics.html>.

American leadership than the more politicized debate in Washington DC is able to tolerate.

‘Grooming for leadership’ - The U.S. military and the institutionalization of grand strategy thinking in senior military education

Leadership is one of the most important qualities the United States military values in its members, and in particular its officers. It is also viewed as the key element for a successful implementation of grand strategy. As General Dempsey remarked in context with the 2012 *Defense Strategic Guidance*:

The real test of this strategy is not in the choices we made, but in putting the choices to work. I am confident that we will pass this test for one simple reason—leadership.⁹⁷

‘Leadership’ as professional military skill and mark of personal character is being developed throughout the career of an officer in the U.S. military in several educational institutions. At the beginning stands officer cadet training, either at the individual service academies, most famous among them the United States Military Academy at West Point and the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, in reserve officer training courses (ROTC) at regular U.S. colleges and universities, or at the military’s officer candidate schools (OCS). These stand at the beginning of a lifelong system of professional military education (PME), where the development of military skills and knowledge is being developed in hierarchical stages of progress, designed so that upon successful completion American officers are able to take on

⁹⁷ Dempsey, “From the Chairman,” p. 3.

ever greater responsibilities for command, from the tactical to the operational, and finally the strategic level.⁹⁸

In the context of grand strategy discourse the most important of these institutions and programs are those that train future flag-rank and general staff officers for the highest military command positions, and other high-profile assignments in national security and defense policy. At this level, the senior education of military leadership at war colleges incorporates the teaching of grand strategy, IR theory and geopolitics, deemed essential professional knowledge for in turn maintaining the global leadership role of the United States.

The syllabus for the course ‘Fundamentals of Statecraft,’ part of the National War College’s core curriculum illustrates this. Designed to introduce the objects and issues of the ‘highest level of strategic thought,’ it emphasizes the practice of grand strategy over abstract theory, and in particular singles out such classical thinkers and practitioners of war, military power and geopolitics as Niccolo Machiavelli, Carl von Clausewitz, and Henry Kissinger for study and critical examination about the ‘assumptions that underpin strategists’ thinking.’⁹⁹ A CSIS report on professional

⁹⁸ For a detailed description of PME and its various stages of officer training, see Center for Strategic and International Studies, “Professional Military Education: An Asset for Peace and Progress,” in *American Defense Policy*, eds. Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta, and Collins G. Shackelford, Jr. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), pp. 302-314.

⁹⁹ U.S. National War College, *Course 1, Syllabus – Block A: Philosophies of Statecraft* (Year: 1999-2000), accessed May 2, 2014, <http://www.resdal.org/Archivo/syll-a.htm>. The course is divided in five segments: A: Philosophies of Statecraft, B: Ends, C: Means, D: Integrating Strategy, and E: Strategies for the Post-Cold War-Era, U.S. National War College, *Course 1, Syllabus – Course Overview*, accessed May, 02, 2014, <http://www.resdal.org/Archivo/syll-over.htm>. According to the course overview: ‘Fundamentals of Statecraft’ is a course of applied theory, focused on how to think about national security strategy in a generic way. We are concerned with policy relevant knowledge regarding both national security strategy and statecraft, both the thinking (or planning) part and the doing part. By considering frameworks for strategic thought, by studying how past American national security strategists dealt with the problems they faced, and by familiarizing themselves with the current lively debate on contemporary American national security strategy, students can begin to free their minds from ingrained habits of reasoning and begin to appreciate the subtle and complex relationships among the elements of strategic thought, *ibid*.

military education explicitly stresses the close link between the education of geopolitical and strategic knowledge and the practice of grand strategy:

They [the officers of the U.S. military] represent the human capital that will sustain the global leadership of the United States and secure its role as the world's sole remaining superpower into the twenty-first century.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the education for military leadership becomes entwined with the dominant discourse of grand strategy that establishes the military preeminence and global hegemony of the United States as geopolitical reality. One of the most important institutions for the teaching of grand strategy is the National Defense University (NDU), located in Washington DC, and its National War College (NWC). According to its website:

The mission of the National War College is to educate future leaders of the Armed Forces, State Department, and other civilian agencies for high-level policy, command, and staff responsibilities by conducting a senior-level course of study in national security strategy.¹⁰¹

As Colonel Greg Schultz, chairman of the Department of Strategy and Policy at the NWC, has explained when interviewed for this thesis, American grand strategy is defined by a continued national interest for the promotion of American leadership and a globally engaged United States.¹⁰² In preparing American officers to plan and operate America's military in a strategic context, the military education of grand strategy is yet another site for the reproduction of the geopolitical identity of the United States, and the dominant worldview of power and order the military is supposed to defend. The senior service colleges, like the U.S. Army War College, the U.S. Naval War College, the U.S. Air War College, and the U.S. Marine Corps War College train selected officers (minimum 16-22 years of service) to groom for 'future

¹⁰⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Professional Military Education: An Asset for Peace and Progress," p. 302.

¹⁰¹ "Mission," United States National War College, accessed May, 2, 2014, <http://www.ndu.edu/Academics/CollegesCenters/NationalWarCollege.aspx>.

¹⁰² Colonel Greg Schultz, interview by Georg Löffmann, June 13, 2013.

leadership,’ focusing on the ‘macro-realm of national security strategy’ and teaching them ‘*how* to think as opposed to what to think.’¹⁰³ A further element is the assignment of senior officers as students at graduate schools, or as fellows in think tanks, further stressing the intertextual and intellectual exchange between military thinking and civilian expertise, between formal and practical discourses in the formulation of grand strategy knowledge.

Remarkably though, in the military education of strategy the U.S. military does not define strategy strictly as scientific knowledge, and purely rational-technological calculation of means and ends, like the majority of positivist IR literature. Instead it stresses the creative dimension of strategic thinking, the interplay of means, ends, and ways, and how ‘strategy is an art.’¹⁰⁴ The *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security*, published by the college’s Institute for Strategic Studies, for example explicitly relates the operation of grand strategy to the underlying geopolitical imagination of the country:

At the grand strategic level, the ways and means to achieve U.S. core national interests are based on the national leadership’s strategic vision of America’s role in the world.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, it relates the successful political formulation of grand strategy, and its discursive authority to its intertextual connectivity and recognition in the popular realm:

¹⁰³ Center for Strategic and International Studies, “Professional Military Education: An Asset for Peace and Progress,” p. 312.

¹⁰⁴ “Appendix. Guidelines for Strategy Formulation,” in: *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues. Vol. II. National Security Policy and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr. (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), p. 413. According to Col. Schultz, one of the aim’s of the NWC’s introductory course on strategy is to encourage critical thinking on the assumptions underlying the perception of threats and opportunities in designing a grand strategy, see also U.S. National War College, *Course 1, Syllabus – Block A: Philosophies of Statecraft*.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 414. Here, the U.S. Army War College guide identifies four distinctive grand strategy visions: ‘Isolationism’ (Pre-WW 2), ‘global engagement’ (WW 2), ‘containment’ (Cold War), and ‘American primacy’ (post-Cold War era), *ibid.*

To be effective, each new administration has had to express a vision for the U.S. role in the world that does not outpace the experience of the American people, and thus lose the decisive authority or domestic consensus to implement the strategic vision. Is the vision, in other words, suitable and acceptable?¹⁰⁶

As the Mr. Y article has documented, there is a growing awareness in military circles that the political-military leadership faces the challenge to develop a new strategic narrative that resonates with the American public and that brings the imagination of American leadership in line with changing geopolitical dynamics. Here, the aim is a grand strategy focused on promoting sustainability and common security interests with other countries, rather than just a concentration on threats alone. It seems that in the professional military education of national security, there exists a similar shift toward greater cooperative engagement and approaches of ‘leading from behind,’ when it comes to the definition of American leadership. According to Col. Schultz, a majority of the military and civilian students at the NWC, who as part of their course assignments have to develop a grand strategy for the United States, favor a globally engaged United States and at the same time ‘strong collaborative relationships’ with other countries for the joint promotion of sustainable security.¹⁰⁷

In combination with the *Defense Strategic Guidance* and the latest *National Defense Review* it seem that the U.S. military, both at the top level and in its future leadership personnel, is adapting the premise of American leadership and military preeminence

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Colonel Greg Schultz by Georg Löffmann, June 13, 2013. In 2012 the author and journalist Edward Luce has described an annual grand strategy exercise at the National Defense University, undertaken by high-ranking military officers and civilian officials, which concluded that: “(...) America still had enough power to help shape the kind of world it wanted to see. By 2021 that moment would have passed.” Edward Luce, *Time to start thinking: America and the specter of decline* (London: Little, brown, 2012), p. 9. One officer involved in the exercise explained: “The window on America’s hegemony is closing;” quoted in, *ibid.* He continued: “The country should sharply reduce its ‘global footprint’ by winding up all wars, notable in Afghanistan, and by closing peacetime military bases in Germany, South Korea, the UK, and elsewhere;” *ibid.* The grand strategy vision outlined in the exercise is essentially a call to end American primacy, and to embrace cooperative engagement and military restraint as way to ‘restore America’s economic vitality,’ cf., *ibid.* pp. 8-11.

to a grand strategy vision that is both more dependent on allies and partners, and less willing to accept the costs of global primacy.

Conclusion

The high-level policy documents on defense planning and military strategy, and the wider practical discourse on national security and defense in the Pentagon demonstrate that politically ideas of continued American leadership, hegemony, and global preeminence in military matters coexist, and are in fact developed jointly with visions of increased partnerships and cooperation on the one side, and greater restraint and a more limited geopolitical ambitions on the other side. Such flexibility and pragmatism in the design of grand strategy clearly frustrate ‘purists,’ such as the experts and pundits populating the various beltway think tanks, which oftentimes blend visions of strategy with firmly entrenched ideological predispositions on security and defense.

Yet, the U.S. military, which defines grand strategy predominantly as an creative exercise, seems much more willing to accept such compromises in the complex interplay of ways means and ends that mark the long-term pursuit of the national interest. This seems largely based on a culture of political neutrality, and a pragmatic appreciation for what is perceived as changing geopolitical realities. Beyond the field of professional military education, this pragmatism is also reflected and confirmed for the administration’s civilian and military leadership in national security in such diverse texts as the *Defense Strategic Guidance*, the reports by the National Intelligence Council, or the Mr. Y. article. But the pragmatism of policy planning seems increasingly in conflict with the established mantra of American leadership.

With the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the onset of sequestration, it seems that a focus on restraint has taken on ever-greater discursive significance over the course of Obama's presidency. While this does not signal that the United States is willing to relinquish its global military leadership role, or that there is a reframing of geopolitical identity in official discourse, it has clearly shifted the argumentative focus of security and defense planning away from the 'Long War' on Terror towards a concern with security and sustainability.

This at the same times documents a growing rift between the hegemonic imagination of the United States and its role in the world, marked by notions of leadership, exceptionalism, indispensability and unparalleled military power, and political practices that downsize and reprioritize America's armed forces. The 'pivot to Asia' and sequestration, although discursively linked to a continued vision of 'American leadership,' in fact speak for a United States that has to adapt the makeup of its national security to an age of austerity and unprecedented limitations of U.S. actions that is likely to last into the foreseeable future.

Yet, the political rhetoric of defense reviews and military strategies, the formal expertise of IR scholarship and think tank policy research, and the popular entertainment of Hollywood blockbusters and national politics bestsellers continue to constitute a worldview, where American power and leadership are the essential pillars of world order, globalization and Western values, and the absence of both the cause for global instability and heightened risk, from the continued Syrian civil war, to Chinese assertiveness in the Pacific, and Russian intrusions into Eastern Ukraine.

It seems doubtful if the inconsistencies and tensions in this geopolitical discourse of security, identity and power will be able to last indefinitely in the formulation of American grand strategy. If current trends continue, at some point the language of global leadership and existential threat in elite discourse will have to be adapted to a more limited role of the U.S. in world politics, and a growing popular sentiment that is tired of risking American lives for what seem to be intractable problems of world politics. While the United States will maintain forces and an accompanying defense budget that is still set out to maintain a global military preeminence, and underwrite U.S. hegemony, the definition of both seem to be in flux, and a grand strategy of American primacy seems neither to reflect the political ambition nor the economic reality of the United States.

As such, neither the Air-Sea Battle concept with its limited practical implications and mixed messages concerning the perception and future threat projection of China, nor the ever growing focus on sustainability in the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Reviews* seem designed to reinvigorate U.S. military supremacy to levels of the previous George W. Bush administration. They seem rather designed to better administrate shrinking, or at best flat lining resources in the still vast defense establishment of the United States, and prepare the nation for an era where the 'tide of war has receded,' at least as far as large-scale U.S. military interventions on the ground are concerned.

In the remaining, final chapter it will now be the task to investigate how President Obama, as 'commander-in-chief' has used his position as the country's top representative in foreign and security policy to maintain, or reframe the geopolitical

identity of the United States in political discourse, how this has connected intertextually in expert circles, the media, and the wider public and how he has incorporated popular, formal and practical discourses of hegemony, engagement and restraint in his vision for the country's grand strategy.

7. President Obama – Vision for Change?

“Don’t do stupid shit.”¹ – Barack H. Obama

On a trip to Asia in April 2014, President Obama employed a uniquely American baseball analogy to contrast the popular reflection of his foreign policy in Washington with his own definition of the ‘Obama doctrine:’

You hit singles, you hit doubles; every once in a while we may be able to hit a home run. That may not always be sexy. That may not always attract a lot of attention, and it doesn’t make for good argument on Sunday morning shows. But we steadily advance the interests of the American people and our partnership with folks around the world.²

This careful appreciation for the scope and limitations of American power and influence in the world by the President of the United States renewed once more a virulent debate about Obama’s grand strategy in the American media and expert circles of U.S. foreign policy.³ In fact, shortly after his Asia trip, and an even more off-hand description of his basic foreign policy premise had become prominent, Obama announced the final drawdown of U.S. forces from Afghanistan until 2016.

This would end America’s longest running war by the time the President would leave

¹ Quoted in David Rotkopf, “Obama’s ‘Don’t Do Stupid Shit’ Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2014, accessed August 22, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/04/obama_dont_do_stupid_shit_foreign_policy_bowe_bergdahl. This phrase was apparently used by President Obama in a conversation with accompanying journalists during his trip to Asia in April 2014 to describe his basic foreign policy premise of avoiding further military entanglements of the United States abroad. It gained a wide circulation after it featured prominently in several leading American media; cf., Mike Allen, “‘Don’t do stupid sh--’ (stuff),” *Politico*, June 1, 2014, accessed August 29, 2014, <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/06/dont-do-stupid-shit-president-obama-white-house-107293.html>; according to the *LA Times*: “Within the tight circle of foreign policy aides in the White House, the shorthand captured Obama’s resistance to a rigid catch-all doctrine, as well as his aversion to what he once called the ‘dumb war’ in Iraq;” cf., Christi Parsons and Kathleen Hennessy, “Obama will explain ‘interventionist’ foreign policy at West Point,” *LA Times*, May 25, 2014, accessed August 29, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-obama-foreign-policy-20140525-story.html>.

² Landler, “Ending Asia Trip, Obama Defends His Foreign Policy;” this baseball image was hardly an enthusiastic confirmation of America’s vigorous leadership role. As one op-ed columnist for the *New York Times* wrote: “It doesn’t feel like leadership. It doesn’t feel like you’re in command of your world. [...] What happened to crushing it and swinging for the fences? Where have you gone, Babe Ruth?” Maureen Dowd, “Is Barry whiffing?” *New York Times*, April 29, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/opinion/dowd-is-barry-whiffing.html>.

³ For some prominent examples of this debate in Obama’s second term, see Slaughter, “Does Obama have a grand strategy for his second term? If not, he could try one of these;” Ian Bremmer, “The Tragic Decline of American Foreign Policy;” Paul Bonicelli, “Five years is long enough to wait for an Obama grand strategy.”

office in 2017, yet it also provided his critics with further evidence that a policy of geopolitical retrenchment was at the heart of Obama's grand strategy.⁴

Partly to counter this prevalent popular criticism of his administration's retreat from American leadership, the President presented a much anticipated declaration of the 'Obama doctrine' on May 28, 2014 before the graduation class of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the same location where he had announced a substantial troop increase to Afghanistan five years earlier. Obama defined his speech as description of his 'vision for how the United States of America and our military should lead in the years to come.'⁵ As announced by the White House, the President would now, after having wound up the legacy of the Bush wars, offer his own vision for American foreign policy and national security, and formulate a grand strategy to point the country into the future.⁶

As this chapter will demonstrate, far from a new or original interpretation of America's role in the world, Obama used his speech to reiterate a series of familiar themes that have dominated his formulation of grand strategy ever since he took office in 2009: the continued indispensability of American leadership in the world and the belief in American exceptionalism; a strong emphasis on cooperative

⁴ Cf., Editorial Board, "President Obama continues his retreat from Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obama-continues-his-retreat-from-afghanistan/2014/05/27/ae01686e-e5c2-11e3-8f90-73e071f3d637_story.html

⁵ Barack Obama, "Transcript of President Obama's Commencement Address at West Point," May 28, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/transcript-of-president-obamas-commencement-address-at-west-point.html>.

⁶ Cf., Peter Baker, "Rebutting Critics, Obama Seeks Higher Bar for Military Action," *New York Times*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/rebutting-critics-obama-seeks-higher-bar-for-military-action.html?rref=politics&module=Ribbon&version=context®ion=Header&action=click&contentCollection=Politics&pgtype=article>; John Cassidy, "A reluctant Realist at West Point," *New Yorker*, May 29, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/johncassidy/2014/05/a-reluctant-realist-at-west-point.html>.

engagement, and increased burden sharing with allies and partners in support of an interdependent international order; the end of America's decade of war, a more limited national security focus on counter-terrorism efforts; and finally a prioritization of America's domestic renewal, and a greater concern with military restraint and the prudent use of U.S. power.⁷ As Obama explained at West Point:

America must always lead on the world stage. If we don't, no one else will. The military [...] is, and always will be, the backbone of that leadership. But U.S. military action cannot be the only, or even primary, component of our leadership in every instance. Just because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.⁸

Far from a coherent vision for America's way forward, the West Point speech revealed once more the inherent tension between the established hegemonic imagination of America's irreplaceable leadership and its foundation in military preeminence, and countering discourses of 'nation-building at home', and 'leading from behind.' Unable, and most likely also unwilling to artificially dissolve this tension, Obama formulated a grand strategy that thus failed to deliver the convincing narrative for the geopolitical imagination of the nation that most experts and commentators demanded.⁹ Peter Bergen, national security analyst for CNN and director of the progressive *New America Foundation* think tank, summarized the Obama doctrine as follows:

⁷ In the 2010 *National Security Strategy* Obama had already broadly described this vision: "Going forward, there should be no doubt: the United States of America will continue to underwrite global security—through our commitments to allies, partners, and institutions; our focus on defeating al-Qa'ida and its affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the globe; and our determination to deter aggression and prevent the proliferation of the world's most dangerous weapons. As we do, we must recognize that no one nation—no matter how powerful—can meet global challenges alone. As we did after World War II, America must prepare for the future, while forging cooperative approaches among nations that can yield results. Our national security strategy is, therefore, focused on renewing American leadership so that we can more effectively advance our interests in the 21st century. We will do so by building upon the sources of our strength at home, while shaping an international order that can meet the challenges of our time." Barack Obama, *U.S. National Security Strategy* (Washington DC: The White House, 2010), p. 1.

⁸ Obama, "Transcript of President Obama's Commencement Address at West Point."

⁹ As the *New York Times* commented: "The address did not match the hype, was largely uninspiring, lacked strategic sweep and is unlikely to quiet his detractors, on the right or the left." Editorial Board, "President Obama Misses a Chance on Foreign Affairs," *New York Times*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/opinion/president-obama-misses-a-chance-on-foreign-affairs.html?_r=0.

What Obama did in his West Point speech was to chart a course that balances two natural, and contradictory, American national security impulses -- isolationism and interventionism -- and points to a hybrid approach that avoids some of the pitfalls of either of these strategic approaches.¹⁰

The presentation at West Point and the controversial reaction to it in formal and popular discourses, from *CNN* and the *New York Times* to *Foreign Affairs* and the *National Interest*, once again confirmed the intertextual connectivity, but also the hybridity and ideational complexity of the President's geopolitical vision, which Obama himself has placed between 'isolationism' and 'interventionism.'¹¹ As Obama himself has acknowledged, his grand strategy was not always 'sexy.' Nor, could it fit on a bumper sticker.¹² Both conservatives and liberal proponents of the Washington consensus of hegemony have in turn reacted negatively to Obama's vision for America. They have criticized a mood of national decline, an era of shrinkage, and a strategy of global retrenchment and restraint to have taken hold under the Obama White House: signs of weakness that they hold responsible for dangerously undermining the liberal world order that 'America made.'¹³

¹⁰ Peter Bergen, "Obama says goodbye to American hubris," *CNN*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/28/opinion/bergen-obama-doctrine-smart-power/>.

¹¹ See also the discussion of Obama's speech in Jacob Heilbrunn, "Barack Obama Misfires at West Point," *The National Interest*, May 29, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/obamas-west-point-speech-10552>; Michael O'Hanlon, "The Obama Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141473/michael-ohanlon/the-obama-defense?nocache=1>; Daniel W. Drezner, "Five things I think I think about U.S. foreign policy after Obama's West Point speech," *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/06/02/five-things-i-think-i-think-about-american-foreign-policy-after-obamas-west-point-speech/>.

¹² Cf., Jonathan Chait, "Liberalism's Bumper Sticker Problem," *The New Republic*, April 28, 2011, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/blog/jonathan-chait/87553/liberalisms-bumper-sticker-problem>. In fact, Ben Rhodes, one of the President's deputy national-security advisers, remarkably illustrated this tension between geopolitical complexity and the reductionist demands of grand strategy discourse, when he offered: "If you were to boil it all down to a bumper sticker, it's 'Wind down these two wars, reestablish American standing and leadership in the world, and focus on a broader set of priorities, from Asia and the global economy to a nuclear-nonproliferation regime'." Quoted in, Ryan Lizza, "The Consequentialist. How the Arab Spring remade Obama's foreign policy," *The New Yorker* May 2, 2011, accessed June 3, 2014, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza?currentPage=all.

¹³ Robert Kagan recently reiterated his argument for the fundamental necessity of America's hegemony and military preeminence in a lengthy tractate for the *New Republic*, a leading liberal journal on American politics, firmly embedded in the discourse of hegemonic engagement. Titled "Superpowers don't get to retire," Kagan's again constructs his familiar historic genealogy that represents the current liberal world order exclusively as a result of American agency and willpower, to conclude that under Obama the United States would lack a similar sense of responsibility to underwrite global security and prosperity: "Many Americans and their political leaders

Fig. 18 President Obama at West Point



The declaration of the 'Obama doctrine' at West Point found a mixed echo among foreign policy experts and the media.¹⁴

This was particularly the case for conservative critics and Obama's opponents in the Republican Party, who have attacked Obama's supposed lack of vigor in leading the world, and missing faith in American exceptionalism. Charles Krauthammer, for example, has expressed this conservative frustration and exasperation with Obama's grand strategy: "As with the West Point speech itself, as with the president's entire

in both parties, including President Obama, have either forgotten or rejected the assumptions that undergirded American foreign policy for the past seven decades. In particular, American foreign policy may be moving away from the sense of global responsibility that equated American interests with the interests of many others around the world and back toward the defense of narrower, more parochial national interests, cf., Kagan, "Superpowers don't get to retire;" according to the *New York Times* some of Obama's remarks during his West Point speech were a formulated as direct rebuttal to Kagan's charge, see Baker, "Rebutting Critics, Obama Seeks Higher Bar for Military Action."

¹⁴ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://i.ytimg.com/vi/PbHV1TERoIE/0.jpg>.

foreign policy of retreat, one can only marvel at the smallness of it all.”¹⁵ According to AEI’s Thomas Donnelly, Obama took down the sign: ‘superpower lives here.’¹⁶ Other, more progressive voices, and longtime critics of the Washington consensus in U.S. foreign and security policy, such as Oliver Stone or Andrew Bacevich in turn, have charged Obama not for a lack of leadership, but with continuing on the misguided path of American empire.¹⁷

What these examples from politics, academia and popular culture illustrate is that the President of the United States is both the source and the focal point for much of the national debate on grand strategy, and the country’s future direction in world politics. The American President occupies a privileged position in shaping the national narrative and framing the discourse of the geopolitical identity of the country. Through his constitutional role as head of state and government, and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, the President acts as the face and voice of the nation, and as chief architect of America’s foreign and security policy.¹⁸ Thus, the American President lies at the heart of political debate and policy-making in the United States, but he also represents the central hub in an intertextual network of grand strategy discourse, providing the focus for the policy advice and criticism of Washington think tanks, the reporting and commentary of the media, and the intellectual attention of academic researchers interested in the study of U.S. foreign and security policy.

¹⁵ Charles Krauthammer, “Krauthammer: Obama doctrine forged in retreat,” *Boston Herald*, June 1, 2014, accessed June 2, 2014, http://bostonherald.com/news_opinion/opinion/op_ed/2014/05/krauthammer_obama_doctrine_forged_in_retreat.

¹⁶ Thomas Donnelly, interview by Georg Löffmann, 29 May 2013.

¹⁷ Cf., Stone and Kuznick, pp. 549-615; Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, pp. 19-20.

¹⁸ For a detailed analysis of the different roles of the modern American President, see George C. Edwards III and William G. Howell, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Jim Twombly, *The Progression of the American Presidency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

As Ó Tuathail and Agnew have remarked on the discursive role of the President: “He is the chief *bricoleur* of American political life, a combination of storyteller and tribal shaman.”¹⁹ Indeed, the American President is both a political institution and a highly symbolic figure, invested with the vestiges and icons of American power, from the Oval Office to Air Force One. This also makes the President a particular fixture of American popular culture, from satirical ridicule by the *Simpsons* and the *Ramones* to filmic adaptations of Presidential power and determined resolve, ranging from the *West Wing* (1999-2006) to *24* (2001-2010), and *Independence Day* (1996).²⁰ Two Hollywood action films *Olympus has Fallen* (2013) and *White House Down* (2013) have shown the President, the embodiment of U.S. national security, under attack by terrorists in the White House documenting the continued relevance of terrorism to the threat perception in the United States, as well as the symbolic role the President plays in defending the nation in the popular imagination.

This chapter will critically investigate the formulation of American grand strategy as a geopolitical vision of America’s role in the world as articulated by the President of the United States, and its intertextual linkage to the various popular, formal and practical discourses of national security and geopolitics established so far. This provides a comprehensive analysis of the way Obama’s vision is both reconfirmed and contested by his conduct of foreign and security policy, and the frequent tensions that mark the discourse of American grand strategy between the worldview of American hegemony and the visions of engagement and restraint.

¹⁹ Ó Tuathail and Agnew, “Geopolitics and Discourse,” p. 195.

²⁰ See in this context also, Iwan E. Morgan, ed, *Presidents in the Movies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Here, the President is involved in a constant exchange with competing producers of geopolitical knowledge over the definition of the purpose of American power, ranging from Washington's most influential think tanks to Hollywood blockbusters, from bestselling authors, policy experts, and media pundits, to political opponents, and even diverging voices within his own administration. Finally, the direction the President charts in guiding the nation's role in world politics also constantly reverberates in opinion polls that add a further dimension of popular confirmation or contestation to Obama's geopolitical vision that is being looked at here.

This chapter will focus in particular on high-profile Presidential speeches, policy documents and official statements, such as the annual State of the Union addresses, and several other prominent speeches that have been used by Obama to frame his foreign and security policy since he entered the White House, from West Point to Cairo.²¹ As with the preceding chapter on practical grand strategy discourse, the critical investigation is primarily concerned with the dominant political representation of the geopolitical identity of the United States, marked by the hegemonic imagination of American leadership, and its linkage to national security policy.

As will be demonstrated, Obama's geopolitical vision and conduct of policy in national security is testament to the complexity of world politics at the beginning of the 21st century, and illustrates that established notions of grand strategy seem more and more outdated in a world where various economic, social and political dynamics,

²¹ In fact Obama, generally recognized as a gifted orator able to use inspiring rhetoric, often uses high-profile speeches as political instrument to deflect criticism of his policies, or to lay out his vision on particular issues, from drones to the Afghanistan War.

do not allow for permanently fixed identities and coherent but overly simplistic narratives, supposed to capture a nation's imagination and give purpose to its power. While not quite post-American, Obama's grand strategy is characterized by a multiplicity of discourses and the fluidity of meaning that is accepted rather than avoided when describing America's role in a changing world.

Leading through engagement in a post-American world

President Obama made it clear from the beginning of his presidency that his vision for America's role in the world was intended to depart significantly from that of his predecessor, which had been marked by a preference for unilateralism, a doctrine of preemptive warfare, and a simplistic, Manichean rhetoric of 'you're either with us or against us' that seemed to demand fellowship and support, rather than invite mutual consultation and collaboration. Against this unapologetic display of American primacy by the George W. Bush administration, in particular during Bush's first term, Obama contrasted a geopolitical vision of engagement and cooperation for the United States. In 2009, in his first State of the Union Address, Obama announced a shift of perspective that corresponded with his central campaign message of 'hope' and 'change,' and seemed to actualize it for the future course of U.S. foreign policy:

In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America.²²

This emphasis was repeated in the 2010 State of the Union address: "That's the leadership that we are providing -- engagement that advances the common security

²² Barack Obama, "Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery Address to Joint Session of Congress," February 24, 2009, accessed June 5, 2014 http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress.

and prosperity of all people.”²³ A policy of engagement and Obama’s rhetoric of mutual respect were meant to restore the credibility and international legitimacy of the United States and its policies, which under Bush had reached a dramatic low point in many parts of the world.²⁴ A central point in Obama’s speeches and statements was that the United States was strongest when it could lead through the power of its example, not alone the example of its power: “Recent events have shown us that what sets us apart must not just be our power — it must also be the purpose behind it.”²⁵

This key idea also entered the text of the *National Security Strategy* of 2010: “Our moral leadership is grounded principally in the power of our example—not through an effort to impose our system on other peoples.”²⁶ The idea that American leadership and moral authority in the world could be restored and renewed through a collaborative network of allies and partners seems to represent a long-standing political belief in Barack Obama. While still a U.S. Senator, he had formulated his vision for American politics, and a different set of domestic and foreign policies in

²³ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address,” Washington DC, 27 January 2010, accessed June 5, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>.

²⁴ Cf., Singh, *Barack Obama’s Post-American Foreign Policy*, p. 16; according to a Pew Research poll of the Global Attitudes Project, released in July 2009: “The image of the United States has improved markedly in most parts of the world, reflecting global confidence in Barack Obama. In many countries opinions of the United States are now about as positive as they were at the beginning of the decade before George W. Bush took office;” “Confidence in Obama Lifts U.S. Image Around the World,” Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 23, 2009, accessed, May 22, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2009/07/23/confidence-in-obama-lifts-us-image-around-the-world/>; in 2013 this image had changed somewhat, but was far from the dramatic fall in U.S. standing around the world experienced under Bush. As Pew has commented: “America’s improved image is coincident with Barack Obama assuming the presidency in 2009. Obama has largely received more positive ratings than his predecessor, George W. Bush. [...] Even so, Obama’s ratings are lower now than when he first took office;” “America’s Global Image Remains More Positive than China’s,” Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 18, 2013, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/>. Obama’s public announcement to close down the Guantanamo prison camp within a year after he took office was likewise undertaken to restore America’s moral standing, however to this day Obama has failed to deliver on this promise. In fact, as Matthew Waxman, senior fellow for law and foreign policy at the influential Hoover Institution has argued: “While it decries Guantanamo as contrary to American values, the Obama administration has convinced courts of Guantanamo’s legal validity.” Matthew C. Waxman, “Obama’s Guantanamo Legacy,” Council on Foreign Relations, June 12, 2013, accessed June 5, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism-and-the-law/obamas-guantanamo-legacy/p30926>.

²⁵ Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address,” 2010.

²⁶ Obama, *National Security Strategy*, p. 10.

his best-selling book *The Audacity of Hope*. Here, he had already documented a clear preference for multilateralism:

Acting multilaterally means [...] engaging in the hard diplomatic work of obtaining most of the world's support for our actions, and making sure our actions serve to further recognize international norms.²⁷

The emphasis on engagement, cooperative multilateralism and the joint benefits of a liberal world order under U.S. stewardship have of course long been hallmarks of the way political elites in Washington describe the means and ends of American grand strategy, both to domestic and foreign audiences.²⁸ These themes have been reemphasized under the Obama administration, and represented a central strand of practical grand strategy discourse.²⁹

Running from the President and the White House to the Pentagon and the State Department, there was a deliberate effort to reframe U.S. foreign and security policy right after Obama took office. Aside from the President's high profile statements and diplomatic offers to negotiate and restart relationships with countries such as Iran, North-Korea, Venezuela, Myanmar, or Russia, Secretary Clinton embraced a 'smart power approach' in U.S. foreign policy and launched a *Diplomacy and Development and Review*. Secretary Gates, referring to the 2009 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, also announced the Pentagon's new found focus on 'building partner capacity.'³⁰ As documented in chapter five, this policy initiative was accompanied by a significant effort by high-ranking Obama officials to reconfirm this apparent shift in grand

²⁷ Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope* (New York,: Crown Publishers, 2006), p. 309.

²⁸ Cf., in particular, Ruggie, "Past as Prologue", pp. 108-109; see also Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*; Layne, *Peace of Illusions*.

²⁹ Several authors who have written on U.S. foreign and security policy under Obama have identified 'engagement' as its central theme, while also noting the limitations of this concept, see in this context, David Sanger, "Pursuing Ambitious Global Goals, but Strategy is More;" Singh, *Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy*, p. 19; James Mann, *The Obamians: The Struggle inside the White House to redefine American Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), p. 251.

³⁰ Cf., Clinton, "Leading Through Civilian Power;" Gates, "Helping Others to defend Themselves."

strategy in the realm of formal discourse, with *Foreign Affairs* as a preferred outlet of choice, positioned at the direct intellectual cross-over between political practice and academic exchange in the U.S. foreign policy establishment.³¹

With Obama, engagement was clearly the new game in town. In his speeches and statements on multilateralism and a collaborative foreign policy, President Obama did primarily connect with an established liberal discourse of hegemonic engagement promoted by such diverse voices as Thomas Friedman's and Michael Mandelbaum's *That Used to Be Us*, Brook's, Wolhforth's, and Ikneberry's scholarly articles in support of 'deep engagement,' or the grand strategy recommendations by Brookings and CNAS that all linked arguments for America's continued military preeminence with calls for revitalizing the U.S. economy in order to sustain American leadership in support of a liberal world order of free trade, democratic freedom, and great power peace.

However, where Obama's geopolitical vision of cooperation went further than established notions of multilateral leadership was that he demonstrated a willingness early on to engage with states considered to be America's adversaries without fixed preconditions, or political demands to the other side.³² Obama's rhetoric and

³¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, head of the U.S. State Department's policy planning operation from 2009 until 2011, would again chose this elite publication, when in 2009 she envisioned the role of the United States as a globalized networking power, concluding that: "In the twenty-first century, the United States' exceptional capacity for connection, rather than splendid isolation or hegemonic domination, will renew its power and restore its global purpose." Slaughter, "America's Edge," p. 113.

³² Mann, *The Obamians*, p. 194; Singh, *Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy*, p. 24. During the Democratic primaries Hillary Clinton, Obama's main inner-party opponent would exploit this relatively open stand vis-à-vis countries considered America's enemies to attack his inexperience in foreign policy, cf., Associated Press, "Clinton: Obama 'naive' on foreign policy," *NBC News*, July 24, 2007, accessed June 10, 2014, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/19933710/ns/politics-the_debates/t/clinton-obama-naive-foreign-policy/#.U5bxLBYdsoE. During the presidential campaign, Senator McCain accused his Democratic opponent of being naive in the face of grievous threats to the nation; cf., Michael Cooper, "McCain Sharpens His Foreign Policy Attacks on Obama," *The New York Times*, June 3, 2008, accessed June 10, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/03/us/politics/03mccain.html?_r=0. This conservative charge against Obama's

invitation to dialogue with members of Bush's infamous 'axis of evil' further underlined the promise of policy change; a break with the usual 'threat inflation' and Washington way of doing things, just as Obama's vote against the Iraq invasion set him apart from John McCain and Hillary Clinton, both establishment figures who had supported the decision to go to war. As the bestselling book author and *New York Times* journalist David Sanger has observed: "Obama [...] promised to restore traditional American 'engagement' by talking and listening to America's most troubling partners and reluctant partners."³³

After entering the White House, Obama documented this willingness for a new era of cooperative engagement on several occasions. One of the most visible examples was his presidential speech at the University of Cairo on June 4, 2009, which was designed as a reaching out of the United States to the Muslim world, titled 'a new beginning.'³⁴

I have come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect (...).³⁵

Here, Obama also invited discussions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, 'without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect.'³⁶ However, on Iran the Obama administration actually continued to pursue a two-pronged strategy of diplomatic engagement and economic sanctions, meant to persuade the

supposed weakness, lack of leadership credibility and missing conviction in American primacy would reemerge in the 2012 campaign, when the Republican candidate Mitt Romney attacked President Obama for constantly 'apologizing' for America, and not believing in American exceptionalism, cf., Scott Wilson "Obama, Romney differ on U.S. exceptionalism," *Washington Post*, September 26, 2012, accessed April 28, 2014, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-26/politics/35497342_1_obama-and-romney-exceptionalism-clinton-global-initiative.

³³ Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p. xvi.

³⁴ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a new beginning," June 4, 2009, accessed June 10, 2014, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. Obama also set himself apart by referring to Iran's by its official name and acknowledging the role the United States had played in overthrowing the country's democratically elected government.

country from developing nuclear weapons.³⁷ At the same time, Obama has frequently stated that the United States considered a nuclear armed Iran ‘unacceptable,’ and that military solutions would be ‘on the table’ in dealing with such a perceived threat to U.S. national security.³⁸ The Iran example illustrates that cooperative engagement and diplomacy were not an exclusive grand strategy in itself, but merely one element in the way President Obama pursued national security and foreign policy.³⁹

The charge against Obama’s naiveté in wanting to engage countries like Iran or Russia, and to not clearly label them as enemies or adversaries of the United States, formed part of a larger discourse in expert circles, popular media, and American politics that questioned the conduct of U.S. foreign and security policy under Obama, because it did not fully comply with the dominant mainstream consensus on U.S. hegemony. Both neoconservative and liberal internationalist critics have accused Obama’s grand strategy of ‘weakness.’ It was characterized as ‘fantasy’, or attacked

³⁷ Talks between the United States, the remaining permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and Germany with Iran in Geneva in November 2013 produced a short-term agreement according to which Iran would freeze central component of its nuclear program, in return for eased economic sanctions, “Iran agrees to curb nuclear activity at Geneva talks,” *BBC News*, November 24, 2013, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25074729>; further talks about a long-term solution to the controversy about the Iranian program are being prepared; Steven Erlanger, “Iran and 6 Powers Agree on Terms for Nuclear Talks,” *New York Times*, February 20, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/world/middleeast/iran.html>.

³⁸ Mark Landler, “Obama Says Iran Strike Is an Option, but Warns Israel,” *New York Times*, March 2, 2012, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/03/world/middleeast/obama-says-military-option-on-iran-not-a-bluff.html?pagewanted=all>; in fact the *Atlantic* lists more than twenty statements of President Obama to that effect, Jeffrey Goldberg, “Obama’s Crystal-Clear Promise to Stop Iran From Getting a Nuclear Weapon,” *Atlantic*, October 2, 2012, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/obamas-crystal-clear-promise-to-stop-iran-from-getting-a-nuclear-weapon/262951/>.

³⁹ Another visible example of engagement in Obama’s foreign policy was the ‘reset’ of U.S. relationships with Russia. This ambition of the Obama administration to form a post-Cold War relationship with Russia based on mutual interests and cooperation, was later abandoned in reaction to Vladimir Putin’s annexation of Crimea, and actions in Eastern Ukraine. Instead, the White House considered a new ‘containment’ approach towards Russia, while the ‘reset’ was widely viewed as ‘failure’ of Obama’s foreign policy. See for example, Peter Baker, “In Cold War Echo, Obama Strategy Writes Off Putin,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2014, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/20/world/europe/in-cold-war-echo-obama-strategy-writes-off-putin.html>; as Baker in the *New York Times* has commented: “In effect, Mr. Obama is retrofitting for a new age the approach to Moscow that was first set out by the diplomat George F. Kennan in 1947 and that dominated American strategy through the fall of the Soviet Union;” see also Daniel Nexon, “The ‘failure’ of the ‘reset’: Obama’s great mistake? Or Putin’s?,” *Washington Post*, March 4, 2014, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/04/the-failure-of-the-reset-obamas-great-mistake-or-putins/>; James Goldgeier, “The ‘Russia reset’ was already dead; now it’s time for isolation,” *Washington Post*, March 2, 2014, accessed May 21, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/02/the-russia-reset-was-already-dead-now-its-time-for-isolation/>.

for leading to ‘America’s meltdown abroad.’⁴⁰ Here, Obama appeared as both weak in the face of great power aggression, as with Russia and Ukraine, or China and the Senkakus/Diaoyus islands, and as passive and aloof from the concerns for human rights and humanitarian intervention, as for example with Syria.

As Andrew Bacevich has remarked in *Washington Rules*, the Washington consensus on hegemony is defined by the enduring triad of a ‘global military presence,’ configured for ‘global power projection,’ in order to counter threats through a policy of ‘global interventionism.’⁴¹ ‘American leadership,’ usually an allegory for using America’s global military power, is thus seen as necessary to provide a solution to international problems from Eastern Europe to the Middle East and the South Pacific. Obama’s lack of leadership in turn, that is his alleged reluctance to use hard power, is supposed to have provoked the outbreak of geopolitical crises.

However, this criticism of the Obama doctrine betrays a retrospective, intellectual simplicity in assuming an America-centric, militarized unipolarity, categorizing world politics along clearly defined lines of friendship or enmity with the United States that does not reflect the world of interdependence that Obama regularly referred to in his foreign policy speeches. As the President explained at West Point, while the ‘United States is and remains the one indispensable nation,’ the world has

⁴⁰ Editorial Board, “President Obama’s foreign policy is based on fantasy,” *Washington Post*, March 3, 2014, accessed May 5, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obamas-foreign-policy-is-based-on-fantasy/2014/03/02/c7854436-a238-11e3-a5fa-55f0c77bf39c_story.html; Charles Lipson, “America’s Meltdown Abroad,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 2014, accessed June 1, 2014, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-05-20/opinion/ct-america-standing-overseas-europe-lipson-oped-05-20140520_1_john-kerry-achievement-balance-sheet; Stephen F. Hayes, “Condi Rice Blasts Obama on Weakness, Leadership,” *The Weekly Standard*, March 27, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/condi-rice-blasts-obama-weakness-leadership_786123.html; John B. Judis, “Speak Loudly and Carry a Small Stick,” *The New Republic*, March 12, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116988/barack-obama-foreign-policy-speak-loudly-and-carry-small-stick>.

⁴¹ Bacevich, *Washington Rules*, p. 14.

changed.⁴² “From Brazil to India, rising middle classes compete with us, and governments seek a greater say in global forums.”⁴³ As Zakaria argued in 2008: “At a military-political level, America still dominates the world, but the larger structure of unipolarity -economic, financial, cultural- is weakening”.⁴⁴

Obama’s grand strategy vision, and in particular his emphasis on engagement are intellectually linked to the concept of a post-American world, in which the diffusion of power and the ‘rise of the rest’ are ending an era of American primacy, and where relative decline will mean that the United States is still the most influential, but no longer the sole dominant power in the international system.⁴⁵ Here, more countries than ever before have a say in global governance, and require attention, respect and understanding. As President Obama has remarked during a G-20 summit in London, the world has changed:

If it’s just Roosevelt and Churchill sitting in a room with brandy, [...] that’s an easier negotiation. But that’s not the world we live in.⁴⁶

In fact, as documented in chapter seven, this assessment of a geopolitical rebalancing has already entered official policy documents, such as the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*:

(...) the United States will remain the most powerful actor but must increasingly work with key allies and partners if it is to sustain stability and peace.⁴⁷

A ‘post-American’ scenario also features regularly in the NIC’s long-term grand strategy forecasts, where a ‘global multipolar system is emerging with the rise of

⁴² Obama, “Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony.”

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, p. 218.

⁴⁵ See also, Mann, *The Obamians*, p. 252; Singh, *Barack Obama’s Post-American Foreign Policy*.

⁴⁶ Barack Obama, quoted in Helene Cooper, “On the World Stage, Obama Issues an Overture,” *New York Times*, April 2, 2009, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/03/world/europe/03assess.html?_r=0.

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2010, p. iii.

China, India, and others.’⁴⁸ It also seems to have been a prime rationale behind the ‘pivot to Asia’ the Obama administration launched in 2011/2012, which aimed to strategically reorient the United States to the Asia-Pacific as the future center of gravity in world politics.

Obama was famously photographed on the campaign trail holding a copy of Zakaria’s popular book that firmly established the notion of a ‘post-American world’ in American geopolitical discourse.⁴⁹ Yet, as the political scientist Robert Singh has pointed out, despite the sometimes more outspoken, sometimes more tacit acknowledgement of post-American dynamics and future scenarios of relative decline by parts of the Obama administration, there is a firmly established underlying assumption among Washington elites that “(...) other countries [...] still anticipate, expect and demand American leadership of the international community.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025*, p. iv.

⁴⁹ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*.

⁵⁰ Singh, *Barack Obama’s Post-American Foreign Policy*, p. 7.

Fig. 19 Barack Obama on the campaign trail in 2008



Barack Obama holding a copy of Fareed Zakaria's *Post-American World* while running for President in 2008.⁵¹

As the thesis has demonstrated, this hegemonic imagination is regularly produced and reproduced in popular culture through various blockbuster movies and geopolitics bestsellers, from *Act of Valor* to George Friedman's *The Next Decade*. From the *Avengers* (2012), to *Battleship* (2012), *Battle: Los Angeles* (2011), and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), every alien invasion film produced by Hollywood features American leadership in form of its outstanding military power or unique superheroes as the only possible option for the planet to prevail against an existential threat. In popular bestsellers Friedman and Mandelbaum sum up a

⁵¹ Retrieved December 19, 2014, from <http://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/2008/05/21/books/obama-reads-533.jpg>.

hegemonic worldview that declares the global political, economic, and social reality almost exclusively as a product of American actions:

It is the American example that deserves the most credit for the global spread of democratic politics and free-market economies. In this sense, too, the world of today is the world we invented.⁵²

This fundamental conviction in the necessity of U.S. hegemony animates IR scholarship, visible in the regular demands for the forwarded presence of American Armed Forces, and the necessary command of the global commons by the United States in *Foreign Affairs*, again stressing the exclusivity and singularity of the United States. As Brooks and Wohlforth for example conclude:

In an anarchic world of self-interested states-that is to say, in the real world-the chances that those states will cooperate are best when a hegemon takes the lead.⁵³

The same argument anchors the policy advice of neoconservative and centrist think tanks, from AEI to Brookings that stress American ‘military preeminence’ as necessary foundation of global security. A recent policy paper by AEI and the Heritage Foundation for example again described America’s Cold War and post-Cold War national security strategy as successful vision of global hegemony, designed for:

(...) defense of the American homeland, protection of the common areas of the world through which Americans traded and travelled, and preservation of political equilibriums in parts of the world vital to American security and prosperity, and particularly in Europe and Asia.⁵⁴

Finally, the amalgam of military preeminence, American leadership, and a world order of democratic freedom and free-market capitalism remains a staple feature in

⁵² Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 25.

⁵³ Brooks and Wohlforth, “Reshaping the World Order,” p. 49.

⁵⁴ Jon Kyl and Jim Talent, “A strong and focused national security strategy,” American Enterprise Institute, October 31, 2013, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://www.aei.org/papers/foreign-and-defense-policy/defense/a-strong-and-focused-national-security-strategy/>.

policy documents and official statements from the Pentagon's *Defense Strategic Guidance* to President Obama's own State of the Union Addresses.

These examples highlight the political significance of intertextuality in the discourse of American grand strategy, where presidential rhetoric, expert opinion and popular sentiment regularly intersect in supporting and maintaining an American worldview of exceptionalist singularity and global superiority. However, as Zakaria's *Post-American World* demonstrates, there is also a prevailing counter-influence in American grand strategy discourse under Obama that likewise impacts Presidential policy and rhetoric. The notion of a post-American world, and policies that seem to fall in line with such sentiments, like Obama's efforts for enhanced engagement with allies, partners and adversaries, counteract the dominant construct of hegemonic identity, upsetting the conventional wisdom about American leadership. As Zakaria has argued, writing in the *Washington Post* about this tension between established notions of past American primacy, and the uncertainty about America's future in world politics:

Washington's elites — politicians and intellectuals — miss the old days as well. They wish for the world in which the United States was utterly dominant over its friends, its foes were to be shunned entirely and the challenges were stark, moral and vital.⁵⁵

What the statements by President Obama, Zakaria and others indicate is the widely shared and deeply rooted imagination of geopolitical identity that represents American leadership not only as the result of superior economic and military power, and the attractiveness of American values, but also as the clear demand of other nations, which supposedly see the United States as the single, decisive factor in

⁵⁵ Fareed Zakaria, "Obama's leadership is right for today," *Washington Post*, May 29, 2014, accessed June 10, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-obamas-disciplined-leadership-is-right-for-today/2014/05/29/7b4eb460-e76d-11e3-afc6-a1dd9407abcf_story.html.

world politics, from tackling climate change to concluding the Middle East peace process, and the safeguarding of regional stability in the Asia-Pacific. This betrays a certain hegemonic narcissism where Americans perceive the rest of the world almost exclusively through the prism of their own vaunted leadership role. Not only is our world ‘made in America,’ it is also the only positive world imaginable:

(...) no country is prepared to step in to replace the United States as the world’s government (...). Nor will our economically pressed allies in Europe and Asia shoulder the costs of these global services. [...] a weaker America would leave the world a nastier, poorer, more dangerous place.⁵⁶

There certainly exists an outspoken demand for a leading role of the United States, for example by foreign officials in countries that seek American security guarantees, such as Japan and Poland vis-à-vis China and Russia, or by groups that ask for American military intervention on behalf of their own political goals, like rebel forces fighting in Libya and Syria. Oftentimes however, it seems that the demands and needs for U.S. leadership by others are simply postulated as self-evident reality by key producers of American grand strategy discourse. Not unlike the argument for the U.S. control of the global commons, the idea that something besides American leadership could provide a feasible solution to global challenges simply does not enter the dominant discourse on U.S. foreign policy and national security.

The debate on American grand strategy largely exists within a self-contained and self-replicated political reality of reiterated clichés, normative convictions and historic genealogies. This interlinkage of conventional wisdom, research expertise and political reasoning stretches from the sacrosanct mantra of ‘leadership’ to the frequent labeling of any alternative to all-out hegemony as dangerous and

⁵⁶ Friedman and Mandelbaum, p. 26.

irresponsible ‘isolationism.’⁵⁷ Here, foreign opinions and initiatives can at best augment U.S. hegemony, but never replace it, or claim equal status. Obama’s nuanced vision of leadership however, is more caveated, more appreciative of the complexity of international relations, and less simplistic in its characterization of American power and what it can achieve on the world stage. This alone sets him apart from large parts of the political establishment in Washington, not just the conservative proponents of unmitigated American primacy found in Republican circles, but also the representatives of the liberal vision of hegemonic engagement in the Democratic party. In the words of one high-ranking official who served under both Presidents Obama and Clinton:

You can divide up this town into people who believe that the world revolves around the United States, that other countries wake up in the morning thinking about the United States, and other people who don’t think that. [...] Hillary Clinton thinks of the United States as the world’s indispensable nation, as the world’s leader. She’s still rooted in the Clinton administration of the 1990s. And fundamentally, Barack Obama doesn’t think that way.⁵⁸

From the unsuccessful attempts of the United States to negotiate a climate agreement in Copenhagen, to the refusal of Germany to follow U.S. demands for larger fiscal stimulus packages for the Euro-Zone, or China’s reluctance to accommodate America by rising the exchange mechanism for its currency: the regular professions by American elites how foreign countries instinctively turn to the United States for guidance clearly only reflect part of the reality of America’s influence in world politics. As remarked by U.S. government officials, when Obama came to office he and his administration did not face a ‘rising India and China,’ these countries had

⁵⁷ See in this context in particular, Paul J. Saunders, “The Five Most Abused Foreign-Policy Cliches,” *The National Interest*, March 1, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-five-most-abused-foreign-policy-cliches-9978?page=2>; Daniel Larison, “The Cliches of ‘Leadership’ and ‘Resolve’,” *The American Conservative*, March 3, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-cliches-of-leadership-and-resolve/>.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Mann, *The Obamians*, p. 252.

already risen.⁵⁹ In the words of Singh, when Obama entered the White House “(...) many nations and peoples were simply not looking to Washington any longer.”⁶⁰ In fact, the Gallup Global Leadership Track,⁶¹ described as ‘the largest global public opinion study of views about U.S. leadership’ concluded in 2013:

The image of U.S. leadership worldwide was weaker at the end of Obama’s fourth year in office than at any point during his first administration [...]. This shift suggests that Obama and new Secretary of State John Kerry may not find global audiences as receptive to advancing the U.S. agenda as they have in the past. In fact, they may even find audiences increasingly critical — even in key partner countries.⁶²

In the interdependent world President Obama has described, American leadership seems to be less, not more important than before, and the perception of American power and influence by others is not static, as implied in U.S. grand strategy discourse, but constantly changing, in part due to developments entirely outside of American control, again suggesting less, not more global influence for the United States. Although the discourse of engagement Obama promotes is meant to serve as a bridge, this fundamental tension between the perception of an increasingly post-American world and the continued profession of America’s irreplaceable leadership remains unresolved in the President’s articulation of American grand strategy.

Nation-building at home, covert operations abroad

Engagement under Obama was also meant to correct an over-reliance on military force, the fixation on national security threats, and a pervasive polarization of foreign policy and national security issues that had dominated under Bush and that continues

⁵⁹ Mann, *The Obamians*, p. 72

⁶⁰ Singh, *Barack Obama’s Post-American Foreign Policy*, p. 8.

⁶¹ The Gallup Global Leadership Track is part of the U.S.-Global Leadership Project, a joint effort between the Meridian International Center and Gallup to ‘provide a comprehensive assessment of how world residents view U.S. leadership.’ Gallup, *The U.S.-Global Leadership Project* (Washington DC: Gallup, 2013), p. 1.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

to inform the Washington consensus on hegemony. As deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes, one of Obama's speechwriters and closest foreign policy advisors described this shift in the strategic vision of the Obama administration against established opinion:

What's notable in some of the debate is how much U.S. engagement abroad is viewed through the prism of whether or not we're taking military action, almost up to the point that if you're not using the military you're not dealing with issues. [...] We're seeking to reorient that to show that you can use diplomacy to try to resolve conflicts like we're doing in the Middle East.⁶³

Together with his emphasis on engagement, President Obama reformulated the use of American military power for the pursuit of U.S. national security in significant ways, and by doing so partially redefined the meaning of America's global military preeminence in grand strategy discourse.

When Obama entered the White House he inherited two ongoing wars. The one in Iraq, Obama had always opposed and characterized as the 'dumb war.'⁶⁴ On February 27, 2009 the President fulfilled one of his central campaign promises when he announced that all U.S. forces would leave Iraq by the end of 2011. Afghanistan, however, Obama had always referred to as a 'war of necessity' that had been under-resourced by the George Bush administration, because of the distraction of Iraq.⁶⁵ Obama intended to change this. Shortly after his inauguration on January 20, 2009, he authorized a troop increase in Afghanistan of 17,000 soldiers on February 17, in response to an urgent request by the local commander of U.S. forces, General McKiernan, and while an initial sixty-day review of the war by launched the White

⁶³ Quoted in: Jim Kuhnenn, "Obama Faces 'New Chapter' Of American Foreign Policy," *The Huffington Post*, March 17, 2014, accessed June 10, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/17/obama-foreign-policy_n_4981654.html.

⁶⁴ Barack Obama, "Transcript: Obama's Speech Against The Iraq War," October 2, 2002, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469>.

⁶⁵ Cf., Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Obama Defends Strategy in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, August 17, 2009, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/us/politics/18vets.html>.

House was still underway.⁶⁶ As the *New York Times* observed, the war in Afghanistan would from now on carry ‘Obama’s stamp.’⁶⁷

At the end of an initial sixty-day review President Obama agreed to dispatch another 4,000 soldiers to Afghanistan to implement a COIN strategy, and to ‘disrupt, dismantle and defeat’ al-Qaeda.⁶⁸ This review had also included Flournoy, who together with the Center of a New American Security co-founded by her, had been a staunch supporter of counter-insurgency operations from the outset. As James Mann has reported: “(...) Flournoy returned again and again to core COIN concepts.”⁶⁹ As with the preparation of the 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review*, the implementation of a strategy of counter-insurgency for Afghanistan by the Obama White House was also the result of an institutionalized exchange in the intertextual production of geopolitical knowledge. This interlinkage between the policy advice of senior researchers in beltways think tanks and the policymaking of defense officials and security experts happened both intellectually and personally via Washington’s ‘rotating door’.

As a result of a more comprehensive three-month Afghanistan review Obama then agreed to send an additional 30,000 troops in November 2009, bringing the total American troop strength there to just under 100,000 personnel.⁷⁰ President Obama

⁶⁶ Helene Cooper, “Putting Stamp on Afghan War, Obama Will Send 17,000 Troops,” *New York Times*, February 17, 2009, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/washington/18web-troops.html>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Mann, *The Obamians*, pp. 127-128.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

⁷⁰ This increase had been promoted in particular by the highest ranking military leaders, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mullen, CentCom commander General Petraeus, and the new commander in Afghanistan, General McChrystal, who in the eyes of Obama and others were aggressively pushing for more ‘boots on the ground’ and putting pressure on the White House via Congress and the media, cf., *ibid.*, p. 135. Secretary Gates and Clinton ultimately sided with the military and supported the decision for deploying additional soldiers as a necessary move to undertake a successful counter-insurgency operation in the country, to defeat the Taliban and

finally announced the troop deployment to Afghanistan at a speech at the U.S. military academy of West Point on December 1, 2009. However, with the decision to ‘surge’ in Afghanistan, Obama at the same time changed gear and set new priorities for the war, including a fixed date for the withdrawal of the American presence there. He declared:

We have been at war now for eight years, at enormous cost in lives and resources. [...] And having just experienced the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the American people are understandably focused on rebuilding our economy and putting people to work here at home.⁷¹

Instead of final ‘victory’ through an open-ended counter-insurgency operation, an exit strategy moved into the center of attention in Washington that would allow the United States to start withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan by July 2011. After the end of 2014 U.S. troops would no longer be in the country in a combat role, apart from a residual presence meant for counter-terrorism operations to keep a check on the remnants of the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁷² As Sanger has commented, Obama switched to a strategy of ‘good enough’ in Afghanistan.⁷³ This was a shift in priorities that would allow the United States to finally focus on ‘nation

Al-Qaeda, and ‘win’ the war in Afghanistan, cf., Elisabeth Bumiller, “Obama Team Defends Policy on Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, December 2, 2009, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/03/world/asia/03policy.html>; see also Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*. Others, like Vice-President Biden, deputy national security advisor Thomas Donilon, and White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel favored a narrower policy of counter-terrorism that would require far less resources in troops and dollars, cf. *ibid.* This tension between the civilian and military leadership of the one side, and between the two camps of the Obama administration on the other featured prominently in several popular books on Obama’s foreign policy, most notably among them, James Mann’s *The Obamians*, Bob Woodward’s *Obama’s Wars*, and David Sanger’s *Confront and Conceal*. The latter two both appeared on the *New York Times* best sellers list, and all were widely praised as unique insider’s accounts into the decision-making process of the Obama White House by various foreign policy experts and leading media, from *Foreign Policy* and the *Washington Post* to Nancy Pelosi and *Foreign Affairs*.

⁷¹ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” December 1, 2009, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

⁷² This was made official when President Obama announced that the United States would maintain a force of 9,800 troops in the country until at least 2015, limited to training and counter-terrorism, provided Afghanistan’s new President would sign a bilateral security agreement also guaranteeing immunity of U.S. military personnel. After 2015, U.S. troops would be reduced by roughly half and consolidated in Kabul and at the Bagram airfield. At the end of 2016, the majority of remaining American military presence are then to be withdrawn and confined to a defense group at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.

⁷³ Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, pp. 15-58.

building at home.’⁷⁴ Obama would continue to emphasize his focus on ending America’s wars, not to start new ones, and to weigh the commitment to American national security against the domestic demands of reforming healthcare, education, and the fiscal stability of the country. In his 2012 State of the Union Address Obama opened, not as usual with the state of the American economy, but with the impending end of America’s decade of war:

For the first time in two decades, Osama bin Laden is not a threat to this country. Most of al-Qaeda’s top lieutenants have been defeated. The Taliban’s momentum has been broken, and some troops in Afghanistan have begun to come home.⁷⁵

In 2013, during his second inaugural address Obama stated:

We, the people, still believe that enduring security and lasting peace do not require perpetual war.⁷⁶

Finally, during the 2014 State of the Union address the President declared:

We must fight the battles that need to be fought, not those that terrorists prefer from us – large-scale deployments that drain our strength and may ultimately feed extremism.⁷⁷

This reluctance to ‘entangle’ the United States militarily was also visible when Obama announced a new offensive against Islamist fighters of the Islamic State organization in Iraq and Syria on 10 September 2014.⁷⁸ While Obama declared a prolonged campaign to ‘destroy’ IS, including the formation of an international

⁷⁴ This term was first used by President Obama during his 2012 State of the Union Address: Take the money we’re no longer spending at war, use half of it to pay down our debt, and use the rest to do some nation-building right here at home. Obama, “Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address,” 2012.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address by President Barack Obama,” January 21, 2013, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama>.

⁷⁷ Barack Obama, “President Barack Obama’s State of the Union Address,” January 28, 2014, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>.

⁷⁸ In the speech, Obama reiterated his familiar theme of burden sharing: “(...) this is not our fight alone. American power can make a decisive difference, but we cannot do for Iraqis what they must do for themselves, nor can we take the place of Arab partners in securing their region.” In fact, Obama put U.S. actions against IS in context with the vision of American grand strategy, he had laid out in West Point: “This strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us while supporting partners on the front lines is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years, and it is consistent with the approach I outlined earlier this year: to use force against anyone who threatens America’s core interests, but to mobilize partners wherever possible to address broader challenges to international order.” Barack Obama, “Transcript: President Obama’s speech outlining strategy to defeat Islamic State,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 2014, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/full-text-of-president-obamas-speech-outlining-strategy-to-defeat-islamic-state/2014/09/10/af69dec8-3943-11e4-9c9f-ebb47272e40e_story.html.

coalition, and announced U.S. air strikes in Syria, he vehemently and repeatedly ruled out to send U.S. ground troops back into Iraq.⁷⁹

Obama's emphasis on military restraint, and the need to rebuild American strength at home are intertextually linked to the arguments for offshore balancing that the libertarian Cato Institute and realist IR scholars regularly bring forward, from Stephen Walt, to Christopher Layne, and John Mearsheimer. As Walt for example wrote on offshore balancing:

That strategy -- which would eschew nation-building and large onshore ground and air deployments -- would both increase our freedom of action and dampen anti-Americanism in a number of key areas.⁸⁰

According to Cato's Christopher Preble: "We should reduce our military power in order to be more secure."⁸¹ This again demonstrates that the grand strategy discourse under Obama can not simply be reduced to liberal ideas of cooperative engagement and multilateral leadership. Obama's geopolitical vision incorporated significant elements of realpolitik thinking and a 'realist' concern for conserving America's financial, economic and military strength, plus a repeatedly demonstrated will to use military force unilaterally, when deemed necessary.

Besides ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama also initiated a profound rhetorical shift away from the dominant focus on the singularity of American leadership and the supremacy of U.S. military power that the Global War on Terror

⁷⁹ Michael D. Shear, "Obama Insists U.S. Will Not Get Drawn Into Ground War in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 17, 2014, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/18/world/middleeast/obama-speech-central-command-isis-military-resolve.html?_r=0; see also, Jennifer Rubin, "Obama is the war-weary one," *Washington Post*, September 9, 2014, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2014/09/09/obama-is-the-war-weary-one/>; as of September 2014, ca. 1.500 U.S. troops are present in Iraq in an advisory role, and to protect U.S. diplomatic personnel, and American citizens and facilities in the country.

⁸⁰ Walt, "Offshore balancing: And idea whose time has come."

⁸¹ Preble, *The Power Problem*.

(GWOT) represented. This was still the lens through which President Bush had perceived America's role in the world, a country shaped by what he called the 'defining ideological struggle of the 21st century'.⁸² Whereas Bush envisioned the United States to be committed in an open-ended confrontation against extremists who 'despise freedom' and 'despise America', Obama instead invoked the picture of 'turning the page after a decade of war'.⁸³ During a speech on May 23, 2013 at the National Defense University, home to the National War College, and one of the nation's prime locations for the senior education of grand strategy, Obama declared a change in American counter-terrorism strategy that was widely perceived as an unofficial end to the war on terror.⁸⁴ As Obama explained in his speech, 'every war must come to an end:'

Neither I, nor any President can promise the total defeat of terror. [...] Today, the core of al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the path to defeat. [...] Targeted actions against terrorists, effective partnerships, diplomatic engagement and assistance – through such a comprehensive strategy we can significantly reduce the chances of large-scale attacks on the homeland and mitigate threats to Americans overseas.⁸⁵

The president redefined Bush's global war into a strategy to manage an existing but not existential threat to the United States.⁸⁶ The NDU speech also implied that the United States would continue to rely on one particular instrument in America's

⁸² George W. Bush, "President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address," January 28, 2008, accessed October 5 2013, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080128-13.html>.

⁸³ Ewen MacAskill, "Barack Obama ends the war in Iraq. 'Now it's time to turn the page'," *Guardian*, September 1, 2010, accessed May 22, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/01/obama-formally-ends-iraq-war>.

⁸⁴ Cf., Peter Baker, "Pivoting From a War Footing, Obama Acts to Curtail Drones," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2013, accessed May 23, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/politics/pivoting-from-a-war-footing-obama-acts-to-curtail-drones.html?_r=0; Patricia Zengerle and Matt Spetalnick, "Obama wants to end 'war on terror' but Congress balks," *Reuters*, May 24, 2013, accessed May 23, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/24/us-usa-obama-speech-idU.S.BRE94M04Y20130524>;

⁸⁵ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University," May 23, 2013, accessed May 23, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university>.

⁸⁶ As part of this realignment of counterterrorism policy, Obama also renewed his promise to close down the Guantanamo Bay prison camp, pointed to the release of a Presidential Policy Guidance on the use of force against terrorists, including drone strikes, and formulated his goal to 'refine, and ultimately repeal,' the Authorization to Use Military Force (AUMF) mandate that was passed by Congress after 9/11 and allowed the U.S. President to use all 'necessary and appropriate force' against those he deemed responsible for planning, authorizing, committing or aiding in the September 11th attacks, cf., *ibid.*

counter-terrorism arsenal: drones. One of the signatory policies of Obama's administration has been the marked increase in drone strikes against suspected terrorist targets in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other places, such as Yemen.⁸⁷

The attacks with bombs and missiles on suspected terrorist targets, launched from remote-controlled, unmanned aerial vehicles, were credited by United States officials for having seriously 'disrupted and degraded' al-Qaeda and affiliated groups. In the words of Obama: "Dozens of highly skilled al Qaeda commanders, trainers, bomb makers and operatives have been taken off the battlefield".⁸⁸ Dennis Blair, the former the former director of national intelligence, summed up this policy as follows:

It is the politically advantageous thing to do — low cost, no U.S. casualties, gives the appearance of toughness. It plays well domestically, and it is unpopular only in other countries. Any damage it does to the national interest only shows up over the long term.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See in particular, Sanger *Confront and Conceal*, pp. 243-273. According to the *New York Times*, in Pakistan these attacks approved by Obama include both 'personality' strikes aimed at named, 'high-value' terrorists, and 'signature' strikes that are targeted at training camps and suspicious compounds in areas controlled by militants, see Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will".

⁸⁸ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." At NDU, Obama presented several criteria under which the United States was supposed to operate under in relation to drone strikes and counter-terrorism policy. These include an existing agreement of cooperation between the U.S. and the country above whose territory the drones operate, the use of drones where the insertion of special operations troops is not feasible, and the use of drones without host nation consent, only if a government is either incapable, or unwilling to operate against suspected terrorists. Yet, the fact remains that the use of drones and other covert operations represent a visible expression of U.S. hegemony over the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other nations that is fundamentally at odds with notions of cooperative engagement and mutual respect. This was also highlighted by the outrage the bin Laden raid produced in Pakistan, a political fallout from the covert infiltration of Pakistani territory that has still not been fully cleared up over three years later, see in this context Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p. 243-273.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will." These targeted assassinations have led to severe criticism of Obama both domestically, and abroad for the violation of international law, and the civilian casualties associated with U.S. drone strikes. See on this issue, "Targeted Killings and Drones, Human Rights Watch, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/topic/counterterrorism/targeted-killings-and-drones>; Craig Whitlock, "Drone strikes killing more civilians than U.S. admits, human rights groups say," *The Washington Post*, October 22, 2013, accessed June 10, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/drone-strikes-killing-more-civilians-than-us-admits-human-rights-groups-say/2013/10/21/a99cbe78-3a81-11e3-b7ba-503fb5822c3e_story.html. This aggressive counter-terrorism policy also has countered Obama's pledge to seek a 'new beginning' with Muslim countries. According to opinion polls, in the Middle East hostility towards the United States is higher now than when Obama became President, cf., "America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's." Aside from assurances by U.S. officials, inducing the President that U.S. actions are 'effective,' and 'legal,' and that drone targets would be carefully selected and 'collateral damage' kept to a minimum, no fundamental change of policy is likely to occur, see Obama, "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." Remarkably, President Obama is directly involved in approving the individual targets of drone strikes, a personal participation of an American President in the details of military operations not seen since President Lyndon B. Johnson

In combination with Obama's use of Special Forces, as highlighted by the successful raid on Osama bin Laden by U.S. Navy SEALs on May 2, 2011, the suspected use of cyber technologies against Iran's nuclear program, such as the 'stuxnet' computer virus, or the comprehensive surveillance activities by the NSA, revealed by the agency's former contractor Edward Snowden, the use of American power by President Obama has reformulated American grand strategy and the exercise of hegemony in surprising ways.⁹⁰

This has also found a particular echo in American popular culture, from the Pentagon supported and Navy produced *Act of Valor*, to the immensely successful *Call of Duty* videogame franchise, which regularly features the use of drones and U.S. special operations soldiers in global counter-terrorism campaigns. A prominent example is also Katherine Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* (2013) on the CIA's ten-year hunt for Osama bin Laden.⁹¹

Where President Obama's vision of engagement attempts to balance a tacit appreciation for what has been dubbed the 'post-American world' with the continued emphasis on American leadership, a similar tension in grand strategy discourse exists

approved the targets for U.S. air strikes over North Vietnam, cf., Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will."

⁹⁰ On Obama's foreign and security policy and the use of cyber technologies, such as stuxnet, see Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, pp.188-225; on the bin Laden mission, see John A. Gans Jr., "This Is 50-50: Behind Obama's Decision to Kill Bin Laden," *The Atlantic*, October 10, 2012, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/this-is-50-50-behind-obamas-decision-to-kill-bin-laden/263449/>; and on the NSA revelations, see in particular, "The NSA Files," *Guardian*, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/the-nsa-files>.

⁹¹ Bigelow apparently had substantial support from the White House in acquiring unprecedented access to classified information and intelligence material for producing the filmic adaptation of what is widely considered one of Obama's lasting achievements in national security policy; cf., "Judicial Watch obtains DoD and CIA records detailing meetings with bin Laden raid filmmakers," Judicial Watch, May 22, 2012, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/13421/>. This cooperation outraged Republicans, who accused the White House of instrumentalizing Hollywood for Obama's reelection campaign; cf., Ben Child, "Kathryn Bigelow denies White House favouritism over Bin Laden film," *Guardian*, August 11, 2013, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/aug/11/kathryn-bigelow-bin-laden-film>.

in the President's repeated insistencies that the 'tide of war' is turning and the increased covert use of American power abroad. The result has been that while the age of large-scale American counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is ending, the United States continues to wage a war from the shadows against suspected terrorists and their networks, increasingly making use of remote-controlled drone strikes, cyber technologies, and special operations forces.

These covert tools of American primacy have demonstrated a continued reliance on unilateralism, and the global projection of military power in the pursuit of U.S. national security, but with almost no risk of American casualties, and far fewer financial resources required. While this has been reflected in popular culture and prominent policy statements, critics correctly argued that the covert use of American military power and secret intelligence measures have never been fully integrated into a comprehensive definition of the Obama doctrine. As *New York Times* reporters Joe Becker and Scott Shane have remarked:

His [President Obama's] actions have often remained inscrutable, obscured by awkward secrecy rules, polarized political commentary and the president's own deep reserve.⁹²

SEAL team six, stuxnet, and the NSA represent a 'black hole' in American grand strategy discourse.⁹³ What has occasionally been described as the 'light footprint' of the 'Obama doctrine' by officials in the administration in fact appears as the dark side of Obama's policy of military restraint that only rarely enters the spotlight of presidential rhetoric, or publicly available government documents.⁹⁴ Yet, taken in

⁹² Becker and Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will."

⁹³ Cf., Sanger, *Confront and Conceal*, p. 245.

⁹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 243. In May 2014, the U.S. Justice Department announced it would comply with a court order to publicly release a redacted version of one official memo outlining the legal justification for targeting U.S. citizens abroad in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, Associated Press, "Report: secret drone memo to be disclosed by Obama administration," *Guardian*, May 20, 2014, accessed May, 27, 2014,

context with the critical discourse analysis developed so far, the use of these covert instruments of American power did fall in line with Obama's verdict that U.S. national security should be pursued more cost-effective, with less direct military involvement on the ground, and less burden on the American taxpayer. The use of special operations is part of a grand strategy vision of President Obama that balances but cannot fully resolve the tensions between American leadership abroad, and 'nation building at home.' While envisioning greater military restraint, Obama as commander-in-chief directs a massive national security apparatus in pursuit of an aggressive counter-terrorism policy across the globe. This tension in the execution of American power under Obama, between hegemony and restraint, would find its most accurate expression to date in the phrase 'leading from behind.'

Leading from behind: Hegemony between military restraint and the global retrenchment of American power

The end of America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan notwithstanding, global leadership and military preeminence remain the centerpiece in the geopolitical imagination of key officials in the Obama Administration. In the words of former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates:

The United States is the strongest and greatest nation on earth (...). The power and global reach of its military have been an indispensable contributor to world peace and must remain so.⁹⁵

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/drone-memo-disclose-obama-justice-department>; This move was also motivated politically in context with the Senate confirmation of Harvard professor and former Justice Department official David Barron, who originally drafted said memo, to the first U.S. circuit court of appeals in Boston, *ibid.* The targeted assassination Anwar al-Awlaki, an al-Qaida leader born in the United States, who was killed by a drone strike in Yemen in September 2011, has been a particularly contentious issues in Obama's counter-terrorism policy, and continues to fuel a legal debate in the United States about due process, and the limits of presidential executive powers.

⁹⁵ Gates, "A Balanced Strategy," p. 39.

This is a sentiment that was voiced in a similar fashion by successors Panetta and Hagel, and Secretaries of State Clinton, and John Kerry.⁹⁶ It remains the fundamental tenet of an American worldview dominant in Washington: a lens of geopolitical indispensability and national exceptionalism through which America's global role is perceived. As President Obama declared in 2012 at the annual Veterans of Foreign Wars convention:

We're leading from Europe to the Asia Pacific, with alliances that have never been stronger. We're leading the fight against nuclear dangers. [...] We're leading on behalf of freedom -- standing with people in the Middle East and North Africa [...]; protecting the Libyan people as they rid the world of Muammar Qaddafi.⁹⁷

The global financial crisis and the debate about American decline have not fundamentally discredited the idea of American leadership, or displaced it as a powerful idea about America's role in the world. In a 2011 Pew research poll for example, nine out of ten Americans, across party lines, stated that the United States either stands above all other countries in the world (38%) or is one of the greatest along with some others (53%).⁹⁸ At the same time, however, the geopolitical ambition and scope of the American leadership role are being scaled back under President Obama, adding a further dimension of tension and inconsistency in grand strategy discourse. Aside from the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the abandonment of COIN as a military strategy of choice, this was most visible in

⁹⁶ Cf., Panetta, "Speech delivered at the Shangri-La Security Dialogue;" Hagel in U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Department of Defense Authorization of Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015 and the Future Years Defense Program*, p. 61; Clinton, "America's Pacific Century;" John Kerry, "Opening Remarks Before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations," March 13, 2014, accessed June 16, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/03/223414.htm>.

⁹⁷ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President to the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars," Reno, July 23, 2012, accessed June 10, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/23/remarks-president-113th-national-convention-veterans-foreign-wars>.

⁹⁸ "Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology," Pew Research Center, May 4, 2011, accessed October 4, 2013, <http://www.people-press.org/2011/05/04/section-5-views-of-government-constitution-american-exceptionalism/>.

Obama's 'leading from behind' approach in the Libya crisis, and his response to the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

According to media reports it was due to substantial pressure from some of the key members within his own administration, that President Obama finally gave his approval for American military support of the Libyan rebels fighting Gaddafi.⁹⁹ In arguing for America's involvement in Libya, the President once again invoked the geopolitical identity of American leadership:

To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader and — more profoundly — our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are. Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different.¹⁰⁰

While its superior military assets were providing the opening round of strikes against the Gaddafi regime, and the support of the United States was decisive in securing a vote sanctioning the intervention by the UN Security Council, the United States soon withdrew from the frontlines. Within NATO, France and the United Kingdom took the lead in operating militarily against the Gaddafi regime.¹⁰¹ This new, more cooperative, and at the same time more limited and restrained approach would later become famous as 'leading from behind.' The term is attributed to an unknown

⁹⁹ Most notably among those were Secretary of State Clinton, national security staff member Samantha Power, and the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice, all considered either humanitarian interventionists, or liberal hawks; cf., Helene Cooper, "Obama Takes Hard Line With Libya After Shift by Clinton," *New York Times*, March 18, 2011, accessed April 23, 2014,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/19/world/africa/19policy.html?pagewanted=all>.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Scott Wilson, "On Syria, Obama's past words collide with national security implications," *Washington Post*, February 02, 2014, accessed April 23, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/on-syria-obamas-past-words-collide-with-national-security-implications/2014/02/20/2f61ad7a-9969-11e3-b931-0204122c514b_story.html.

¹⁰¹ From an initial discussion to establish a no-fly zone, Obama and the United States ultimately pressed for a UN Security Council resolution that would authorize all measures to protect civilians on the ground. Essentially, the Libya intervention, which took place in context of the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) was interpreted by the United States and its NATO allies in terms of regime change, to remove Gaddafi from power.

member of the Obama administration, and it found a wide media echo, in particular after it featured prominently in an article published in the *New Yorker*.¹⁰²

The public reaction to ‘leading from behind’ was so strong because the term seemed to encapsulate a new geopolitical vision, a new way the United States exercised its power, and understood its hegemonic position in world politics under President Obama. As Ryan Lizza put it: (...) at the heart of the idea of leading from behind is the empowerment of other actors to do your bidding (...).¹⁰³ At the same time, as the advisor who coined the phrase admitted, this approach counteracted the dominant, popular imagination of America’s world role: “It’s so at odds with the John Wayne expectation for what America is in the world.”¹⁰⁴ Under Obama, the global sheriff was looking for deputies.

In fact, as demonstrated in chapter seven, in his cover letter to the 2012 *Defense Strategic Guidance*, Obama referred to the Libya campaign, and the ‘growing capabilities of allies and partners’ to illustrate his vision of ‘burden-sharing.’¹⁰⁵ To Republicans, ‘leading from behind’ represented further proof that Obama’s vision consisted of diminishing U.S. power in the world, and accepting American decline.¹⁰⁶ Although Obama never used the term ‘leading from behind’ himself, it

¹⁰² Lizza, “Leading from Behind;” see also Charles Krauthammer, “The Obama doctrine: Leading from behind,” *Washington Post*, April 28, 2011, accessed April 23, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html; Michael Boyle, “Obama: ‘leading from behind’ on Libya,” *Guardian*, August 27, 2011, accessed April 23, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/aug/27/obama-libya-leadership-nato>; Katy Steinmetz, “Top 10 Buzzwords: 10. *Leading from Behind*,” *TIME*, December 07, 2011, accessed April 23, 2014, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101344_2100571_2100582,00.html.

¹⁰³ Lizza, “Leading from behind.”

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Rizza, “The Consequentialist.”

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Strategic Guidance*, cover letter.

¹⁰⁶ Cf., Krauthammer, “The Obama doctrine;” see also Roger Cohen, “Leading from Behind,” *New York Times*, October 31, 2011, accessed April 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/01iht-edcohen01.html>.

seemed to fit with the understanding of America's changed role in a more interdependent world that he laid out in successive statements and speeches.

Whereas George W. Bush had formulated a vision of American primacy with an expansive agenda for global transformation through military force in the Global War on Terror, Obama's 'leading from behind' seemed like a remarkable reformulation of the established hegemony of the United States that incorporated the uniqueness of American power and American values into a cooperative context of 'limited engagement.' Yet, leading from behind would ultimately not provide a lasting formula to bridge the tensions and inconsistencies in American grand strategy discourse. The initial success of the Libya campaign notwithstanding, there seems to exist a general weariness in the United States about the country's global commitments, disillusionment with military interventions and their political outcomes, and a heightened awareness for the complexity of world politics in the 21st century.

As one newspaper article headline put it: "Team America no longer wants to be the World's Police."¹⁰⁷ The title itself is a pop-cultural reference to the filmic parody of the United States as a militarist, over-the-top, jingoist superpower in the 2004 comedy film *Team America: World Police*. While the popular representation of America's heroism and military power still regularly provide the context for successful Hollywood blockbusters, from the *Battleship* (2012) to *Captain America*:

¹⁰⁷ Aaron Blake and Sean Sullivan, "Team America no longer wants to be the World's Police," *Washington Post*, September 13, 2013, accessed April 28, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/09/13/team-america-no-longer-wants-to-be-the-worlds-police/>.

The Winter Soldier (2014), the era of excess and hubris *Team America* parodied seem no longer to capture American's imagination of national security.

There is a growing popular sentiment in the United States that questions the country's extensive foreign commitments, and that demands greater focus on domestic concerns. A much reported Pew research poll for example found that 52% of Americans said the U.S. should 'mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own' — the first time since 1964 that more than half the public held that view.¹⁰⁸ Within the dominant discourse of hegemonic engagement, this result and similar polls like it, were promptly denounced as sign for a dangerously increasing mood of 'isolationism' among the American people.¹⁰⁹

As Stephen Walt has written in reaction to just such an 'isolationist' headline in the *New York Times*: "Hawks like to portray opponents of military intervention as 'isolationist' because they know it is a discredited political label."¹¹⁰ Here in fact emerges a further intertextual link in grand strategy discourse, between realists such as Walt, proponents of libertine conservatism, such as the Cato Institute, and President Obama that all seek to disentangle a policy of non-interventionism and

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Drake, "Obama charts a new foreign policy course for a public that wants the focus to be at home," Pew Research Center, May 28, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/28/obama-charts-a-new-foreign-policy-course-for-a-public-that-wants-the-focus-to-be-at-home/>.

¹⁰⁹ Megan Three-Brennan, "Poll Shows Isolationist Streak in Americans," *The New York Times* April 30, 2013, accessed June 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/01/world/american-public-opposes-action-in-syria-and-north-korea.html?_r=1&;

¹¹⁰ Stephen Walt, "Sloppy Journalism at the *New York Times*," *Foreign Policy*, May 1, 2013, accessed June 3, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/01/sloppy_journalism_at_the_new_york_times. As Walt would detail in his article: "Yet there is a coherent case for a more detached and selective approach to U.S. grand strategy, and one reason that our foreign policy establishment works so hard to discredit is their suspicion that a lot of Americans might find it convincing if they weren't constantly being reminded about looming foreign dangers in faraway places. The arguments in favor of a more restrained grand strategy are far from silly, and the approach makes a lot more sense to than neoconservatives' fantasies of global primacy or liberal hawks' fondness for endless quasi-humanitarian efforts to reform whole regions;" *ibid*.

military restraint from the stigma of isolationism employed by neoconservative primacists and liberal hegemonists, which continue to uphold the bi-partisan consensus of American global leadership. As Cato's Benjamin Friedman and Christopher Preble have commented:

(...) the public is neither isolationist nor misguided when it comes to foreign policy. Americans do not want to withdraw from the world; they just prefer not to try to run it with their military.¹¹¹

Obama made his case for greater restraint at West Point as follows:

Since World War II, some of our most costly mistakes came not from our restraint but from our willingness to rush into military adventures without thinking through the consequences, without building international support and legitimacy for our action, without leveling with the American people about the sacrifices required.¹¹²

Even more striking when it comes to the established mainstream consensus of U.S. foreign policy were poll results about the popular sentiments of U.S. citizens toward American leadership in the world, the sacrosanct mantra of the grand strategy discourse in Washington that Obama too was unwilling to breach. As Pew reported:

Americans believe U.S. influence in the world is declining. About half (53%) said the U.S. role as a world leader is less important and powerful than 10 years ago while only 17% said it was more important. Seven-in-ten said the U.S. is less respected by other countries than in the past. About an equal number favored a shared leadership role in the world with far fewer saying the U.S. should be the single world power.¹¹³

Despite the majority of popular, formal and practical discourses that overwhelmingly stress the exceptionalism and indispensability of American leadership, and the paramount importance of U.S. military preeminence for peace, prosperity, and freedom, the American people seemed quite willing to accept a more restrained and less hegemonic role of their country in world politics. As an article in *Time* magazine

¹¹¹ Benjamin H. Friedman and Christopher Preble, "Americans Favor Not Isolationism But Restraint," *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 2013, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/americans-favor-not-isolationism-restraint>.

¹¹² Barack Obama, "Transcript of President Obama's Commencement Address at West Point."

¹¹³ Drake, "Obama charts a new foreign policy course for a public that wants the focus to be at home."

concluded: “Simply put, Obama has given the people the foreign policy they want—one in which America “mind[s] its own business.”¹¹⁴ The President himself did acknowledge this national mood of retrenchment and restraint, when he directly quoted from a veteran’s letter addressed to him, during his nationally televised address on Syria: “This nation is sick and tired of war.”¹¹⁵ But while in his Syria speech Obama reemphasized his focus to end America’s wars, not to start new ones, and to focus on rebuilding the nation at home, he did invoke the image of American exceptionalism as a special responsibility for the United States to act abroad when its unique values were violated, as with the gas attacks attributed to the Assad regime in Syria.

On the other hand, Obama went to great lengths to distinguish a possible military intervention in Syria from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the beginning ruling out the possibilities of ground invasion, regime change, or even a prolonged air campaign like in Kosovo, or Libya. This caveated, limited and cautious link between exceptionalism, American leadership, and U.S. policy that Obama demonstrated in his speech was then further strained by the fact that the President postponed seeking an authorization for military strikes from Congress, a vote he was likely to have lost, and instead opted for a diplomatic solution in accordance with Russia. President Obama closed his remarks on Syria with the following:

America is not the world’s policeman. Terrible things happen across the globe, and it is beyond our means to right every wrong. But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death, [...], I believe we should act. That’s what makes America different. That’s what

¹¹⁴ Michael Crowley, “This May Be the Real Obama Doctrine,” *TIME*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://time.com/120645/obama-west-point-doctrine-foreign-policy/>.

¹¹⁵ Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria,” September 10, 2013, accessed April 28, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

makes us exceptional. With humility, but with resolve, let us never lose sight of that essential truth.¹¹⁶

The image of American exceptionalism in Obama's speech implied a special responsibility of the United States to commit its outstanding military assets when its 'unique' values were violated, however a policy that would demonstrate this failed to materialize. While President Obama worked towards redefining American grand strategy toward restraint, engagement and multilateral cooperation, the country's geopolitical identity remains firmly linked to an image of American leadership and military preeminence, and the use of force in defense of American values and national interests.

On Libya, Obama could reconcile this tension, encapsulated in the phrase 'leading from behind.'¹¹⁷ On Syria however, the President could not provide an image of determined leadership. The implied consequences for crossing the 'red lines' Obama set up in his speech did not result in military actions by the United States, and 'red lines' has become a symbol for the perceived weakness of the United States under Obama among conservative critics, foreign policy experts and the media.¹¹⁸ Even though a majority of Americans favored a diplomatic solution in Syria, the dominant impression is that Obama and the United States had been diplomatically outmaneuvered by Russia.¹¹⁹ A CBS/New York Times poll, released on 25 September 2013, revealed that just 37 percent approved of President Obama's

¹¹⁶ Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria."

¹¹⁷ Cf., Leslie H. Gelb, "In Defense of Leading from Behind."

¹¹⁸ Cf., Matt Spetalnick, "Obama's Syria 'red line' has echoes in his warning to Ukraine," *Reuters*, February 20, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/20/us-ukraine-crisis-obama-idU.S.BREA1J2C920140220>;

¹¹⁹ Dan Balz and Peyton M. Craighill, 'Poll: Americans strongly back diplomatic solution on Syria but give Obama low marks', *The Washington Post*, September 17, 2013, accessed April 28, 2014, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-09-17/politics/42124841_1_chemical-weapons-61-percent-47-percent.

handling of the Syrian crisis. His general approval ratings on foreign policy also dropped significantly over the course of the Syria episode.¹²⁰

The controversy over Syria indicated a fundamental tension prevailing in American grand strategy discourse on all levels, between a geopolitical vision of engagement and restraint, and a hegemonic imagination that still locates the country as the world's leader and expects its political rhetoric and actions to reflect this identity. This split also seems present within the American population, which according to polls favors diplomatic engagement, and is weary of further military entanglements abroad, but is also critical of the perceived lack of American leadership. 'Leading from behind' seems to quite accurately describe the mood of a majority of Americans when it comes to their country's preferred role in the world, but the implication of a diminished status of the United States is resented at the same time.

The *New York Times* has observed that for 'critics ranging from Senator McCain to human rights activists,' U.S. actions over Syria have 'come to symbolize the erosion of America's leadership role in the world during the Obama presidency.'¹²¹ Robert Kagan, writing in the *Washington Post* has remarked that, while according to polls Americans in general favor a focus on 'nation building at home' and 'leading from behind,' the geopolitical image of exceptionalism, leadership and indispensability has also been a source of national pride and self-confirmation: "To follow a leader to

¹²⁰ Ariel Edwards-Levy, "Americans think Putin has been more effective than Obama on Syria," *Huffington Post*, September 27, 2013, accessed April 28, 2014 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/27/putin-obama-syria_n_4002351.html. Beyond the negative popular reaction to Obama's performance, there also seems to be a significant elite perception of American 'weakness,' in context with Syria. A recent article in *Foreign Policy* remarked how Japanese leaders and scholars saw American passivity on Syria and now Ukraine as having damaged American credibility in Asia, see Will Inboden, "When Asian leaders look at Obama, they see Ukraine and Syria."

¹²¹ Landler, "Ending Asia Trip, Obama Defends His Foreign Policy."

triumph inspires loyalty, gratitude and affection. Following a leader in retreat inspires no such emotions.”¹²² ‘Leading from behind’ has not been able to dissolve this conundrum of having to inspire the geopolitical imagination of the nation through policies aimed at limiting costs and risks.

However, within the context of the established elite and popular discourses on U.S. foreign policy and national security President Obama was more willing than most to challenge conventional wisdom. He regularly stressed the contingency of American leadership on the country’s economic recovery and fiscal sustainability, and he emphasized the value of diplomatic engagement, instead of a singular focus on military action in matters of national security. During a press conference Obama reacted strongly to criticism of his foreign policy, in particular the reticence the United States displayed to get involved militarily over Syria and Ukraine:

Typically, criticism of our foreign policy has been directed at the failure to use military force. And the question I think I would have is, why is it that everybody is so eager to use military force after we’ve just gone through a decade of war at enormous costs to our troops and to our budget?¹²³

Obama has not reframed the geopolitical identity of the United States to replace the imagination of American exceptionalism and indispensability. Given its cultural embeddedness, discursive authority and political importance such a move seems neither politically feasible, nor would it have accurately reflected Obama’s grand strategy that sought to reformulate, but not relinquish American leadership in the world.

¹²² Robert Kagan, “President Obama’s Foreign Policy Paradox,” *Washington Post* March 27, 2014, accessed, April 28, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obamas-foreign-policy-paradox/2014/03/26/c5284c2e-b4f8-11e3-8cb6-284052554d74_story.html.

¹²³ Quoted in, Juliet Eilperin, “Obama lays out his foreign policy doctrine: Singles, doubles and the occasional home run,” *Washington Post*, April 28, 2014, accessed September 17, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/obama-lays-out-his-foreign-policy-doctrine-singles-doubles-and-the-occasional-home-run/2014/04/28/e34ec058-ceb5-11e3-937f-d3026234b51c_story.html.

Indeed, ‘American leadership,’ military preeminence and the use of force by the United States seem to have become almost synonymous in the mainstream discourse that represents the bi-partisan consensus on U.S. foreign and security policy. For Brooks, Ikenberry and Wolfforth, the United States has pursued a single successful grand strategy since the end of World War II:

Its military bases cover the map, its ships patrol transit routes across the globe, and tens of thousands of its troops stand guard in allied countries such as Germany, Japan and South Korea.¹²⁴

According to Robert Kagan:

If there has been less aggression, less ethnic cleansing, less territorial conquest over the past 70 years, it is because the United States and its allies have both punished and deterred aggression (...).¹²⁵

The Brookings Institute has stated that U.S. military power is a ‘stabilizing element in the current global environment.’¹²⁶ From the editorial and commentary pages of the *New York Times*, to the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal* to the decidedly liberal *New Republic*, or the staunchly neoconservative *Weekly Standard* and *Fox News*, Obama is attacked for his lack of leadership and unwillingness to confront the provocations of aggressive great powers.¹²⁷ As Zakaria has observed:

Obama is battling a knee-jerk sentiment in Washington in which the only kind of international leadership that means anything is the use of military force.¹²⁸

Here, engagement and diplomacy are often associated with the historic stigma of ‘appeasement,’ and nuance with a lack of moral fiber and conviction in America’s

¹²⁴ Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wolfforth, “Lean forward,” p.130. The lessons from Iraq should not be restraint and retrenchment, instead the United States should follow the example of the Cold War after Vietnam, and wage war through ‘proxies and highly limited interventions,’ cf., *ibid.*, p. 137.

¹²⁵ Kagan, “Superpowers don’t get to retire.”

¹²⁶ O’Hanlon, *A Moderate Plan for Additional Defense Cuts*, p. 31.

¹²⁷ Cf., Andrew Bacevich, “We’re just not that special,” March 5, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/03/american-exceptionalism-russia-ukraine-104318.html#.U43LExZJpOd>; Michael Gerson, “Obama’s foreign policy and the risks of retreat,”; Stephen F. Hayes, “Condi Rice Blasts Obama on Weakness, Leadership,” John B. Judis, “Speak Loudly and Carry a Small Stick,” Roger Cohen, “Putin’s Crimea Crime,” *The New York Times* March 3, 2014, accessed June 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/putins-crimea-crime.html?_r=0;

¹²⁸ Fareed Zakaria, “Obama’s disciplined leadership is right for today.”

unique destiny. In the words of Andrew Bacevich: “In the American Exceptionalist catechism, isolationism comes in a close second to appeasement in the ranking of heinous sins.”¹²⁹

However, Obama’s careful shift in perspective about the possibilities of America’s role in the world, and the more limited meaning of military force, seem also to correspond with a certain generational change in popular attitudes toward American exceptionalism. A 2011 Pew poll found that only 32% of the current Millennials generation in the U.S. thought their country was ‘the greatest in the world’ — compared to 72% of those between the ages of 76-83.¹³⁰

The geopolitical vision of restrained leadership and global engagement that President Obama has formulated reflects the post-American future rather than the hegemonic past of America’s role in world politics. But most influential scholars, pundits and policy makers remain embedded in the Washington consensus of hegemony, mired in a unipolar worldview. They seem unable to move beyond the narrative of America as triumphant victor of World War 2 and the Cold War, and global defender of freedom and democracy. The American people on the other hand seem increasingly willing, and able to accept the post-American future in world politics that Obama’s geopolitical vision has pointed to. This might prove to be the lasting change of America’s role in the world that Obama’s grand strategy has achieved.

¹²⁹ Bacevich, “We’re just not that special.”

¹³⁰ “Generational Divide Over American Exceptionalism,” Pew Research Center, 18 November 2011, accessed June 3, 2014 <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/generational-divide-over-american-exceptionalism/>.

Conclusion

A critical analysis of Obama's articulation of grand strategy suggests that this President acted not so much a transformative, but as a transitional figure. Obama has hinted at new realities for the dominant role and position of the United States in world politics, marked by fewer resources, more limited ambitions, and a more careful and restricted use of American power. The various presidential speeches and statements in this context are intertextually linked to U.S. government estimates, such as the NIC report series and the Pentagon's *Quadrennial Defense Reviews*, the findings from IR scholarship, think tank research in policy analysis, and various popular media reflections. Representations and the practices of U.S. national security and foreign policy under Obama have documented a complex process of geopolitical adaptation and realignment, motivated both by the perception of an ever increasing dynamic of multipolarity, and the ambition to restore the domestic base of America's economic strength, in order to preserve American leadership into the near future.

Here, President Obama simultaneously connected with all three basic discourses of American grand strategy, analytically identified in the thesis as hegemony, engagement and restraint. Yet, this multidimensional character in the formulation of national security and foreign policy failed to convince large segments of the foreign policy establishment, which predominantly expected the un-caveated confirmation of American leadership. As the *Washington Post* has commented:

‘Ending wars.’ ‘Nation-building at home.’ The ‘pivot to Asia.’ These are popular and attractive slogans, and they make a lot of sense in the abstract. But they don't necessarily bring peace to a dangerous world (...).¹³¹

¹³¹ Editorial Board, “President Obama continues his retreat from Afghanistan.”

Obama's simultaneous confirmation and contestation of such diverse discursive strands as multilateral hegemony, liberal, internationalism, realist offshore balancing, military primacy, and American exceptionalism made it impossible to assign the President's geopolitical vision a clear and distinctive label that would correspond to the narrative cohesiveness and clarity of purpose geopolitical strategists, foreign policy experts and media pundits expect of grand strategy.

Just as the Washington establishment's definition of American leadership remains anchored in a U.S.-centric genealogy of the current international order, and the historic narrative of American victory in World War 2 and the Cold War, the dominant discourse of American grand strategy is unable to move beyond the fixation with containment and the intellectual allure of George Kennan's 'Long Telegram.' Accordingly, the dominant voices of the Washington consensus demand clarity of vision and confirmation of leadership, not the pragmatic management of relative decline, or the tacit reorientation towards a more complex, and interdependent world of multiple centers of global power and influence.

Obama's grand strategy managed to disappoint the expectations of neoconservative primacists, humanitarian interventionists, realist offshore-balancers and radical critics of American empire in equal measure. The President himself appeared at least in parts to be critical of the established grand strategy discourse, when he and some of his closest advisors contrasted Obama's careful, analytical style against the polarization of issues and the instinctual recourse to military action that accompany the habitual calls for 'American leadership' in Washington.

While, like his predecessors before him, Obama regularly confirmed and reconstituted a vision of America's global leadership, military preeminence and U.S. power as foundation for liberal values and international order, he at the same time strongly promoted the idea of burden sharing, and stressed the need for collaborative action in an ever more interconnected and interdependent world. However, the limits of Obama's engagement did not only manifest themselves in the unwillingness of several potential partners to renegotiate their relationships with the United States, and become 'responsible stakeholders' in a U.S.-led international order, but also in the inability to fully reconcile the notion of a post-American world and the implication of relative American decline with the hegemonic identity of the United States as the 'indispensable nation.'

A similar tension exists between Obama's profession that America's decade of war is ending, and the insistence on military restraint, and an increase in covert operations, drone strikes and secret intelligence tools in counter-terrorism policy that violate international law and infringe on the national sovereignty of enemies, allies and partners alike. Here, Obama arguably represented not a break with the Bush administration but an escalation of its policies. The need to square hegemonic geopolitical ambitions and the perception of diminished resources, power and influence, and thus practices that run counter to the established notion of American leadership marked the discourse of grand strategy throughout the Obama presidency. This perpetual tension would be partially captured in the phrase 'leading from behind' that rose to prominence over the Libya intervention.

Obama has not acted as a President, who is already operating in a post-American world, but he has formulated a grand strategy that points the way into a future where American leadership will be less distinctive, more contingent on outside support, and ultimately less in control of the shaping of outside events and processes, from the Middle East to the Pacific and Eastern Europe. To a foreign policy establishment that constantly professes that this world and its established order are a product of American leadership, this careful reframing of American grand strategy discourse has come as a disconcerting iconoclasm. Yet, Obama has been in tune with an American public that is increasingly weary of the country's foreign commitments, although Americans seem to welcome the substance of a more restrained U.S. foreign policy more than the cautious style it is delivered with.

Obama uses the image of American exceptionalism and hegemony to advance policies actually designed to lessen the burden of American leadership, and to divert resources, both economic and intellectual, for domestic priorities, thus inverting the conventional linkage of exceptionalist rhetoric and hegemonic practices expressed through foreign interventionism and the use of force. Yet, as the Syria episode illustrated, the identity of America as a leader in world politics and policies that counteract this identity cannot be bridged indefinitely within the existing paradigm of geopolitical identity. This conflict between the hegemonic imagination of American leadership and the practice of cooperative engagement and military restraint under Obama, raises the question about the limits of reframing American grand strategy and the potential future breaking point of the existing discourse.

8. Conclusion

Speaking at the 2014 commencement ceremony at West Point, President Obama declared:

(...) by most measures, America has rarely been stronger relative to the rest of the world. Those who argue otherwise -- who suggest that America is in decline, or has seen its global leadership slip away -- are either misreading history or engaged in partisan politics.¹

This dogged confirmation of American leadership was also meant as a rebuttal of Robert Kagan, who had accused Obama in the *New Republic*, to ‘preside over an inward turn by the United States that threatened the global order and broke with more than 70 years of American presidents and precedence,’ as the *New York Times* described it.² Ironically, only two years earlier Obama had embraced Kagan’s argument for U.S. hegemony in his 2012 State of the Union Address, where he announced that the United States would remain the ‘indispensable nation’ of world affairs.

The contradiction of opinions about the status of America’s role in the world between the politician Obama and the academic Kagan, publicized in the country’s leading media, highlighted once again the ongoing controversy in the national debate over grand strategy. The episode also demonstrated how reflections of grand strategy are frequently cross-referenced and mutually reconfirmed, and contested between scholarly analysis, Presidential rhetoric, and popular media, bringing into focus

¹ Obama, “Transcript of President Obama’s Commencement Address at West Point.”

² Jason Horowitz, “Events in Iraq Open Door for Interventionist Revival, Historian Says,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 2014, accessed July 29, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/us/politics/historians-critique-of-obama-foreign-policy-is-brought-alive-by-events-in-iraq.html?_r=0; cf. Kagan, “Superpowers don’t get to retire.”

several points the thesis presented here has examined in relation to the meaning, operation and impact of American grand strategy under the Obama presidency.

First, grand strategy functions as an intertextual and cross-discursive process of construction of geopolitical identity, which establishes a dominant worldview, constituted and reconstituted between the realms of popular culture, academic expertise, and political reasoning. Secondly, the idea of American leadership, exceptionalism and indispensability is paramount to the dominant discourse of grand strategy, anchoring the geopolitical imagination about the role of the United States in a deep-seated and widespread concept of hegemonic identity. Finally, the vision of American grand strategy pursued by President Obama, reflecting a redefinition, but not replacement of hegemony, is contested from within the foreign policy establishment, revealing a fracturing of the national consensus about the purpose of American power, the use of force, and the nature of American leadership in the world.

In addressing the formulation of American grand strategy under the Obama administration, and its interlinkage with national security policy through an intertextual analysis of popular, formal and practical discourses, the thesis has provided a critical reconceptualization of grand strategy that successfully incorporated geopolitical identity as an analytical dimension in the context of power/knowledge. Looking at texts from popular books to films, speeches, policy documents, and research articles, the thesis could demonstrate how representations of leadership, exceptionalism, and military supremacy are fundamental in constituting a worldview of American hegemony that far exceeds a strict material understanding of

grand strategy, and the use of power for security. Exploring the intertextual links between identity and policy then revealed that the American grand strategy the Obama administration defined was in fact multidimensional, reflected in competing, and conflicting discourses of hegemony, engagement, and restraint that reconfirmed, but also reformulated this geopolitical vision of American leadership.

Regarding the existing literature on the subject, this approach constituted a theoretical and epistemological innovation, offering a critical research perspective on a traditionally positivist understood concept, mainly associated with realism. At the same time, the thesis advanced methodologically from the conventional sphere of discourse analysis in critical geopolitics. Moving beyond a mainly representational understanding of discourse, it included material factors, such as sales figures and impact factors, in its intertextual analysis, operationalized in an interpretive framework of power/knowledge. Finally, the investigation of American grand strategy entailed both an analysis of the discursive performance of such terms as ‘indispensable nation’ and ‘American exceptionalism,’ and an examination of the practical procedures interlinked with these discursive tropes, from filmmaking to the trajectory of the American defense budget and military intervention, that constitute them as political, social and cultural reality.

From the conclusions provided by the thesis, grand strategy then should primarily be understood as expression of a dominant worldview, culturally embedded, intertextually constructed, and reconstituted across discursive domains. It is based on normative assumptions, beliefs, historic narratives, and convictions, which are pre-imposed on the discourse of strategy and security, not gained through a positivist

process of empirical analysis. While conventionally understood as a process of calculation of the future, and the anticipation of outcomes, grand strategy works *ex post*, rather than *ex ante*. It is a projection of the past into the future: a product of conventional wisdom, and establishment thinking, supported by historic genealogies that stress continuity over change, simplicity over complexity, and coherence over ambiguity.

From *Battleship*, and Robert Kagan's bestselling *The World America Made* and President Obama's 2014 speech at West Point, to the majority of grand strategy articles published in *Foreign Affairs* and the policy papers on national security of Washington's leading think tanks: American leadership in the world is discursively imposed as the only viable option in the international system that can guarantee global freedom, prosperity and peace: The only world imaginable is the world America made.

The dominant American grand strategy discourse thus de-politicizes issues of national security policy and geopolitics by establishing an exclusive reality of American leadership, exceptionalism and military supremacy as beyond legitimate debate. The de-legitimization of libertarian and realist concepts of restraint as forwarded by the Cato Institute, or the IR scholar Stephen Walt as 'isolationism,' by proponents of the bi-partisan consensus of U.S. hegemony is a perfect example for this genealogical construction of the grand strategy discourse. Neoconservatives and liberals from AEI and Charles Krauthammer, to Brookings and President Obama declare a geopolitical vision of territorial self-defense and greatly limited military expenditures to stand outside acceptable opinion by linking it to the dominant

narrative of the catastrophic results of ‘appeasement’ and ‘isolationism’ in World War 2.

The idealization of George F. Kennan and containment as a ‘golden age’ of American grand strategy on the other hand exemplary reveals a highly selective and biased reading of history that reproduces a basic narrative of American exceptionalism and the country’s role as victorious defender of freedom. This narrative largely ignores the constant threat of mutual nuclear annihilation, the immense human costs of the superpower proxy wars from Vietnam to Afghanistan, and the questionable role the United States has played in the past to counter a perceived threat of Soviet expansionism. Calls for the return of grand strategy expose a peculiar nostalgia for a supposedly simpler, less complex geopolitical environment, in which America’s enemy was clear, and its sense of national purpose guaranteed.

Critically reconceptualizing grand strategy as a discourse of geopolitical identity in the context of power/knowledge has allowed the thesis to question the use of such de-politicizing tactics. Grand strategy thus appears not simply as an empirical description and scientific analysis of external reality, but as a political worldview that divides world politics into legitimate and illegitimate concepts of identity, power and order. Grand strategy in short is never neutral, but highly politicized. The majority of American grand strategy thinking is retrospective, conservative, and reluctant to accept changing geopolitical realities, greater complexity and less certainty in the international system. Both, a non-interventionist, offshore balancing United States that practices restraint, and a ‘post-American world’ of multiple centers of global power and influence in which the country exist as only one of many

hubs, directly clash with the established narrative of American leadership, and the dominant identity construct of global superpower status. Maybe worst of all, the grand strategy visions of engagement and restraint offer more complexity and uncertainty for the future, not less.

In the dominant grand strategy discourse promoted by the Washington consensus, the 'big picture' is supposed to be clear, coherent and focused. Realities that seem to question long-held beliefs, assumptions and convictions of geopolitical identity are being rejected, when they question the hegemonic premise of 'American leadership.' The ongoing political debate about Congressional sequestration and cuts to the Pentagon budget for example continues to be as virulent as it is, because it touches on this entrenched hegemonic identity of the United States as unchallenged, global superpower, and the political-military practice necessary to sustain this status. A singularity of thinking impedes the ability for political change and ideational transformation. In highlighting the nexus of geopolitical identity and national security policy, the research presented here has thus achieved to go beyond a utilitarian understanding of grand strategy as rationalist reduction of complexity.

A critical perspective can highlight the multiple tensions, fractures and inconsistencies entailed within the formulation of grand strategy that the conventional literature misses. This appreciation for, and acceptance of complexity, nuance and multidimensionality does not devalue the concept of grand strategy, or diminish the insight of critical approaches to international relations, but strengthens the interpretive value of both. If we want to better understand how a country acts in the world and the motivation it follows in its actions, we should look at how a nation

defines its role in the world, the beliefs, assumptions and narratives that this is based on, and the implications this has for the construction of knowledge, expressed in the formulation of policies, the authority of scholarly expertise, and the definition of conventional wisdom. To gain insight into these debates about a nation's future, its aspirations, and limitations via the lens of its dominant geopolitical imagination, this is the value of grand strategy.

Limitations of research

One of the problems with this cross-discursive, intertextual approach of analysis is that it sacrifices depth for breadth. An investigative approach that considers discursive sites as varied as popular culture, academic expertise, and policy making naturally cannot provide the same amount of detailed analysis into one particular issue as for example an exclusive monograph on the geopolitical imagination of the national security cinema. However, rather than a weakness, such a method that highlights the mutual interconnectedness of fields of analysis normally observed separately responds positively too often heard calls for interdisciplinary openness and network-oriented thinking in the social sciences. Here, the thesis also offers possibilities for future research connections with related fields such as history, cultural studies, or linguistics.

A further limitation arises from the fact that the main research interest of the thesis lies in how American grand strategy operates within an elite framework of political, academic and popular discursive domains. This largely excludes marginalized, or fringe voices, discourses of resistance, or outsider definitions of America's

geopolitical identity that might come, for example from groups such as Occupy Wall Street. Such subjugated knowledges are undoubtedly insightful for mapping out the many alternatives to the establishment view of what America should be in the world.³ Yet, as the thesis demonstrated, it is within the foreign policy establishment that we encounter a considerable bandwidth of conflicting opinion about America's future strategic course. This is all the more relevant because this conflict occurred at the very center of what constitutes the elite network responsible for the formulation of U.S. foreign and national security policy, and that claims to speak for 'America.'

Advantages of research design

Incorporating insights from critical geopolitics in the study of national security allows a more inclusive discussion of what grand strategy actually means, the implication it has, and what this reveals about the role of convictions, perceptions and assumptions in world politics and their materialization in security discourses and practices. A rethinking of American geopolitical identity away from its fixation with leadership, exceptionalism and hegemony could for example divert substantial financial resources from defense toward domestic spending programs, from education to healthcare.

A United States that perceives its role as a more equal and interdependent member of the international system however, would also have to result in a mutual reformulation of several key relationships between the United States and its friends and allies. This would mean that the United States ceases to perceive its partners in

³ Cf., Milliken, p. 243.

Europe and Asia primarily as infantilized, and occasionally derided auxiliaries to American hegemony, unfit to be trusted with managing the ‘commons,’ or providing international security and global governance.

On the other hand, several countries would need to decrease their existing dependence on the United States in international security matters, from intelligence to military assets. At the moment it is still the default position, particularly in Europe to hope for the United States to act as the world’s policeman, and to criticize it afterwards. A grand strategy vision of engagement as cooperative partnership would thus have to be reciprocated by countries willing to share joint responsibilities for combating terrorism, or deter regional aggression, based on shared threat assessments and common interests.

A critical analysis of grand strategy, national security and geopolitics encourages us to not reduce world politics to abstract, reductionist conceptualizations of what reality should be, exclusively understood in terms of materiality, empiricism, and positivism, but rather to investigate the multiple implications of human imagination and interaction in the construction of social reality, which forms and reforms in various domains, and in different constellations of power and knowledge. A critical grand strategy perspective should encourage us for example to question the often-postulated equation of unipolar stability, military supremacy and global security as self-evident truth. Given the negative record of past military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, the usefulness, effectiveness and validity of military power in achieving lasting political stability seems very much in doubt. Conclusions about the use of military power and national security should at the very least be

probed extensively for each individual case, not reduced to knee-jerk reactions about Western credibility and American leadership, be it in Syria or Ukraine.

On the other side, a dogmatic position of restraint as often presented by realists should also be questioned. Simply ignoring severe human rights violations and genocidal practices might be consistent with a coherent grand strategy of 'offshore balancing,' but it would be ethically and morally reprehensible. In a globalized world, grand strategy should be about understanding complexity and reacting flexibly to changing environments, not to remain fixated on artificial notions of coherence and consistency.

American grand strategy as discourse of geopolitical identity: The worldview of American hegemony

Grand strategy is a prism of interpretation that reveals dominant perceptions of the national self in a world political context, and it filters policies as either confirming or contesting such a dominant construct of geopolitical identity. It sets the national framework for the conduct of foreign and security policy and demarcates the limits of debate and acceptable opinion. As such it represents a nexus of power/knowledge in the Foucauldian sense in that what is considered an acceptable grand strategy for the United States is bound up with hierarchies of legitimacy and influence that advance certain conceptualizations of geopolitical knowledge and historic narratives over others.

For the United States, the dominant, legitimized mainstream discourse of grand strategy is a discourse of hegemony, which describes both the dominant representation of the geopolitical identity of the country as leading political, military, economic and cultural power in the world, in popular films, books, articles, policy papers, strategy documents, and Presidential speeches, and the practice of securing this position as the global number one, and ‘steward of the international system.’

From Hollywood blockbusters to popular bestsellers, political debates and conventional scholarly analysis, Americans continue to be socialized in, and informed by a mainstream discourse that reproduces the geopolitical reality of a dominant United States, reflecting a narrative of historic continuity marked by America’s victories in World War 2 and the Cold War. However, rather than determining policy outcomes, ‘American leadership’ seems primarily vital for confirming the self-image of the United States in the American geopolitical imagination.

In an era marked by increasing geopolitical uncertainty, as documented in the popular, formal, and practical discourses that frequently represent changes to the status quo predominantly as threat and risk scenarios, from the Arab Spring to the rise of China, and Russian revisionism, an American grand strategy is expected to provide national self-confirmation. The discourse of hegemony then serves an identity building and identity stabilizing function, meant to assure the continued premier status of the United States in the international system. In the words of President Obama:

(...) the United States is and remains the one indispensable nation. That has been true for the century passed and it will be true for the century to come.⁴

This comes at a time where the global financial crisis and the outcome of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have seriously undermined the premise of a ‘unipolar moment’, and the American claim to world leadership seems more tenuous than maybe at any point since the end of the Cold War. Yet, discounting a few outliers within the engagement and restraint discourses, global leadership, American exceptionalism, and indispensability remain the prism through which most influential discursive producers in the United States perceive, and in turn reconstruct America’s role in world politics. When it comes to grand strategy, it is thus a question of how and through which means the United States should lead in the world, not if.⁵

Issues of representation and political practice are not separate, but intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing each other in the discourse of grand strategy of hegemony. This linkage manifests itself in multiple ways that go beyond strict national security and defense policy: The provision of military goods and services by the Pentagon to film productions that confirm the image of US military supremacy. A researcher of the CSIS think tank anonymously drafting a speech by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, confirming America’s status as a ‘Pacific power.’ The hiring of leading members of the Center for a New American Century think tank by the Obama White House into senior positions for foreign policy and defense. Secretary Gates presenting the Pentagon’s new ‘partner-building’ initiative in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*. The political endorsement of Hillary Clinton, widely considered a ‘liberal

⁴ Obama, “Transcript of President Obama’s Commencement Address at West Point,” May 28, 2014.

⁵ As President Obama explained at West Point: “The question we face, the question each of you will face, is not whether America will lead, but how we will lead -- not just to secure our peace and prosperity, but also extend peace and prosperity around the globe.” Ibid.

hawk' by Robert Kagan, a staunch, neoconservative hegemonist in the *New York Times*.⁶

These are only some of the examples how the geopolitical vision of American leadership is being maintained and reinforced in Washington DC. As such, the production of the grand strategy discourse of hegemony also represents a self-reinforcing cycle of conventional wisdom, elite status and professional expertise that rewards the perpetuation of the status quo, rather than outside-the-box thinking, or progressive ideas. In fact, the geopolitical imagination of global leadership, maintained and reproduced by the elite class of the US national security and foreign policy establishment, is responsible for an entire political economy of hegemony, manifest in multiple think tank research projects, multi-billion US-dollar weapons programs, university study programs, and a prolific publishing enterprise that runs under the 'grand strategy' label.

The discourse of grand strategy then achieves its political significance not as a stringent blueprint for political and military action, but primarily as attempt to reconfirm the hegemonic identity of the United States of America in a time where this identity seems to come more and more under pressure. This hegemonic role and position has undoubtedly provided a national sense of destiny, and certainty of purpose for the world's 'only remaining superpower.' The realization that the time of the United States as the world's indispensable nation might come to an end in a post-American world, a possibility the popular, formal and practical grand strategy

⁶ Kagan commented on Clinton: "I feel comfortable with her on foreign policy;" quoted in Horowitz.

discourses so far have at best hinted at, is therefore a potential shock to the national imagination that could shatter America's hegemonic narcissism.

Competing visions, conflicting discourses: Hybridity, intertextuality and the 'breaking point' of the grand strategy discourse

Under the Obama presidency there is no single, dominant American grand strategy that actually functions as the coherent narrative and supreme guideline to the national interest that foreign policy experts, media pundits and strategists themselves postulate. There is no longer a national consensus on America's role in the world. Liberal hawks and neoconservative primacists defend an increasingly tenuous status quo of unipolarity, hegemony and military supremacy against calls for change by libertarian conservatives, progressives, and realists, which all demand a strategic course correction and greater restraint in the conduct of American foreign and security policy, and in particular the use of force.

President Obama does not side with either side completely, but adopts elements from all these competing discourses in his articulation of grand strategy. Obama's grand strategy actually represents a multitude of conflicting discourses that point the country in different directions, between unipolar leadership and military supremacy, cooperative partnerships and post-American dynamics, and geopolitical retrenchment and military restraint. The much-highlighted 'pivot to Asia' of the Obama administration for example appears less as a coherent and consistent set of strategically oriented policies, and more as testament to a discourse of geopolitical uncertainty where the United States simultaneously seeks to contain China as a rival,

and engage it as a partner in the Asia-Pacific region. A duality of the geopolitical imagination accurately captured as ‘conengagement’ by the Cato Institute.

The competing discourses of grand strategy, simultaneously employed by the President as expressed in his frequent use of such key formulations as ‘indispensable nation,’ ‘leading from behind,’ and ‘nation-building at home,’ reveal a complexity of contemporary international relations, which is not easily subsumed under one central narrative, unitary threat perception, and single-minded prioritization of national resources that grand strategy is supposed to deliver. However, this does not mean that grand strategy does not exist, or play a role in the Obama White House, as critics argue. Neither does it mean that grand strategy does not serve a function within the context of national security policy. Hegemony, engagement and restraint provide the ideational framework under which the foreign and security policy of the Obama administration operates, and through which it is confirmed and contested from the outside.

This multitude of competing and conflicting geopolitical visions in Obama’s speeches and policies did not lead to the coherence and consistency, grand strategists expect, leading to the frequent charge that President Obama lacks a grand strategy to begin with. But this multidimensional grand strategy discourse accurately reflects the President’s political priorities in addressing the country’s foreign and security policy, the domestic commitments it is weighed against, and the changing geopolitical environment. A development that US government institutions like the Pentagon and the NIC expect to increasingly move toward a global multipolarity of power and influence.

However, only by moving beyond the idea of grand strategy as stringent input-output equation of material resources calculated against an identified enemy, and by applying a discursive framework of investigation and understanding does the grand strategy of the Obama administration become recognizable as such. It is not the lack of grand strategy then that marks the conduct of national security and foreign policy under the Obama administration, but the increased adversity and complexity in defining America's role in the world.

Obama's grand strategy seems to match the national mood, and is supported by a majority of the American people, according to the latest opinion polls that have indicated that a majority of Americans want the United States to 'mind its own business.' This in turn points to a further fracturing of the dominant grand strategy consensus between elites and the American public. It seems that in addition to libertarian conservatives, realists, and progressives a majority of the American people is questioning the wisdom of hegemony and primacy. Even popular films such as *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, *White House Down*, or *Avatar* seem to contain critical reflections of American leadership and military supremacy, demonstrating how Hollywood, normally a bastion of the production and reproduction of conventional wisdom, can occasionally challenge the premise of American hegemony.

Given that the mantra of American leadership is such an essential element of the established American grand strategy discourse, a key representation of identity Obama himself has not challenged, this conflict between elite opinion and popular sentiment points to further friction in the grand strategy discourse in the future,

should the United States continue to match a rhetoric of hegemonic indispensability with political practices that seek to contain American power and limit the use of force.

The worldview of American grand strategy then, understood as geopolitical vision of American leadership in the world underwritten by a posture and policy of global military primacy, which up to the presidency of George W. Bush represented a dominant consensus for more than seven decades, is fracturing at the very center of mainstream discourse. This challenge to hegemony is not limited to the usual criticism from left, progressive circles, but pits the foreign policy establishment against itself, where the President himself, influential think tanks, popular authors and respected scholars are bringing forward alternative formulations for a US role in the world.

In President Obama the discourse of hegemony is quasi challenged from within, when the commander-in-chief of America's Armed Forces declares that 'because we have the best hammer does not mean that every problem is a nail.' The new focus on restraint and engagement however ill fits with the established representation of American leadership as central trope of geopolitical identity construction. This raises the question about the future breaking point of the discourse, and how long this tension will be sustainable, between the country's hegemonic self-perception of indispensable global leadership, and its national security policies oriented toward greater shared responsibility and the pragmatic management of retrenchment in a multipolar world.

Here, Obama so far neither fundamentally changed course, nor did he provide a radical redefinition of America's role in the world. It was neither an embrace of isolationism, nor an acceptance of American decline, but a pragmatic response to maintain American leadership in an anticipated, but not yet fully realized post-American world. This balancing act between assuring the American people of America's continued importance as the world's only superpower, and a policy that seeks to strategically redistribute the responsibilities of global leadership, and that sometimes chooses to not exercise leadership at all, is marked by a fundamental inconsistency in the discourse.

While Obama is a transitional President that has modulated, but not completely redefined the dominant vision of hegemony, future Presidents might be forced to reformulate American grand strategy more radically, and to provide a lasting, new definition of America's role in the world that brings in line representations and resources, rhetoric and practice. This would likely involve providing a long-term vision, which redefines the country's geopolitical identity to better match a world in which the United States might still be the most important factor in an interdependent, and interconnected world, but where it is no longer the sole, indispensable nation.

Beyond American grand strategy: A critical research perspective for the study of identity and security in world politics

The density and variety of data collection, the cross-discursive observation of knowledge production, and the attention to intertextuality in both discursive representations and practices the thesis has employed points to avenues of IR

research beyond an individual study of US foreign and security policy. A research design that seeks to operationalize the examination of identity and the political practices that confirm, or contest dominant ideational concepts accepts that knowledge is not built in isolation, and that worldviews are expressed in words and actions. Such an incorporation of materiality however, should not be undertaken for the sake of positivist reduction and simplification, but rather in an attempt to open the study of security for the possibilities of complexity, multidimensionality, nuance, and change that eschews both the simplicity of a power based cause and effect logic, and the reduction of political processes to the textual writing of identity.

Future analysis could for example be operationalized in more detailed research designs, with a greater scope of content analysis, wider use of original empirical data collection, and greater focus on policy impact. A possible angle of enquiry could also lie in devising comparative research designs that examine the geopolitical and national security discourses of more than one country, to anticipate likely friction in foreign and security policy due to diverging conceptualizations of two nations' respective understandings of their role in the world.

Another significant aspect that requires further research is the question of coherence and congruence between identity and policy, and the implications of a divergence between constructs of geopolitical identity and national security policy. Here, rather than dismissing the concept of grand strategy for its retrospective and reductionist bias altogether, the thesis has offered a research perspective that would utilize the concept as interpretive device for the durability of ideational concepts of identity and historic narratives in a world political context. The cracks that have appeared in the

Washington consensus over the course of the Obama presidency suggest that a dominant discourse of identity cannot be endlessly juxtaposed against contrary political practices. When and how a reframing of geopolitical identity would have to occur in order to realign discourse, policy and practice would be a valuable research question for further study.

The world does not operate according to the ideas and ideals of strategists. The global complexity of international interactions, -politically, economically, militarily, and culturally-, frustrates their political preferences for intellectual simplicity and clarity of vision. The failure to grasp an increasingly post-American world through a coherent and consistent American grand strategy also reveals a crisis of Western political thinking and confidence in the progress of liberal modernity. A theme explored by the Indian author and essayist Pankaj Mishra, who wrote that considering the multiple crises and conflicts affecting the Middle East, Europe, and Asia:

(...) the most commonplace response seems to be despair over American 'weakness' and accusations about what Barack Obama, as president of the 'sole superpower,' should have done or ought to do.⁷

Beyond lamenting a lack of 'American leadership,' most thinkers of grand strategy seem unable to respond to a changing world, which has been shaped by centuries of European and American dominance, both materially and intellectually, but appears now more and more influenced by events and processes outside the West's control. The thesis has demonstrated that a criticality rooted in an empirically rich, intertextually dense exploration can offer more substantiated and sophisticated claims about the mutual correlation of power and knowledge, inviting us to question

⁷ Pankaj Mishra, "The west is not a model for the rest," *Zeit*, September 13, 2014, accessed September 17, 2014, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-09/geopolitics-west-democracy-freedom>.

long-held premises, normative assumptions and established narratives in a world that is in flux. However, such a dense reading is likely to lead to more complex understandings of International Relations. Judging from this study of American grand strategy however, it is the multitude of knowledge, the multidimensionality of power, and the fluidity of discourse, not artificial coherence and consistency, which produce the reality of geopolitics.

9. List of Abbreviations

ASB	Air-Sea Battle
BCA	Budget Control Act
CAP	Center for American Progress
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNAS	Center of a New American Security
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSBA	Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CT	Counter-terrorism
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DSG	Defense Strategic Guidance
IC	Intelligence Community
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDU	National Defense University
NIC	National Intelligence Council
NSA	National Security Agency
NWC	National War College
ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
OCS	Officer Candidate School
PME	Professional Military Education
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
ROTS	Reserve Officer Training Course
SEAL	Sea Air and Land Team of the U.S. Navy
UN	United Nations
USMC	United States Marine Corps
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

10. Appendix – List of Interviews

Interview with Christopher Preble, 21 May 2013, Washington DC.

Interview with Andrew Bacevich, 22 May 2013, Boston, MA.

Interview with Thomas Donnelly, 29 May 2013, Washington DC.

Interview with Michael O’Hanlon, 1 June 2013, Washington DC.

Interview with Mark Mykleby, 7 June 2013, Beaufort SC.

Interview with Greg Schultz, 12 June 2013, Washington DC.

Interview with Shawn Brimley, 15 June 2013, Washington DC.

11. Bibliography

"About the Best Sellers." News Surveys and Election Analysis Department of *The New York Times*. Last modified January 23, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/best-sellers-books/paperback-advice/list.html>.

"About Foreign Affairs." Foreign Affairs. Accessed November 13, 2013. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/about-us>.

"About Sustainable Security." Center for American Progress. Accessed January 27, 2014. <http://www.americanprogress.org/about/ss-about/>.

"About the Department of Defense (DOD)." U.S. Department of Defense. Accessed May 5, 2014. <http://www.defense.gov/about/>.

"About Us." Center for Strategic and International Studies. Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://csis.org/about-us>.

Ackerman, Spencer. "Pentagon Quit the Avengers Because of Its 'Unreality'." *Wired*, May 7, 2012. Accessed July 12, 2013. <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2012/05/avengers-military/>.

Adler, Emanuel. "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics." *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): pp. 319-363.

Agnew, John. "American Hegemony into American Empire? Lessons from the Invasion of Iraq." *Antipode* 35 (2003): pp. 871-885.

Agnew, John. "An Excess of 'National Exceptionalism': Towards a New Political Geography of American Foreign Policy." *Political Geography Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1983): pp. 151-166.

Agnew, John. *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics*. London, New York: Routledge, 1998.

Agnew, John. "Know-Where: Geographies of Knowledge of World Politics." *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2007): pp. 138-148.

Agnew, John and Stuart Corbridge. *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Alexander, David. "Big Budget Cuts Pose 'Tough, Tough Choices' for Pentagon: Hagel." *Reuters*, March 6, 2014. Accessed March 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/06/us-usa-defense-budget-idU.S.BREA2500W20140306>.

Allen, Mike. "'Don't Do Stupid Sh--' (stuff)." *Politico*. June 1, 2014. Accessed August 29, 2014. <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/06/dont-do-stupid-shit-president-obama-white-house-107293.html>.

Altman, Roger C. "A Geopolitical Setback for the West." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): pp. 2-14.

American Enterprise Institute. *Annual Report*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2012.

American Enterprise Institute. *Defense Spending 101*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2012.

"American Grand Strategy." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed November 5, 2013. <http://www.cfr.org/grand-strategy/american-grand-strategy/p31797>.

"American Grand Strategy." Duke University. Accessed August 8, 2014. <http://agsduke.com>.

"American Grand Strategy," *The Diplomat*. Accessed August 6, 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/tag/american-grand-strategy/>.

"America's Global Image Remains More Positive than China's." Pew Research Global Attitudes Project. July 18, 2013. Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/18/americas-global-image-remains-more-positive-than-chinas/>.

Anderegg, Michael. *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

"Another BRIC in the Wall." *The Economist*, April 21, 2008. Accessed March 05, 2013. http://www.economist.com/node/11075147?story_id=11075147.

Appelman Williams, William. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972.

"Appendix. Guidelines for Strategy Formulation." In *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues. Vol. II. National Security Policy and Strategy*, edited by J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., pp. 413-418. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012.

Art, Robert J. "A Defensible Defence: America's Grand Strategy." *International Security* 15, no. 4 (1991): pp. 5-53.

Art, Robert J. *A Grand Strategy for America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

Art, Robert J., ed. *America's Grand Strategy and World Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Art, Robert J. "Geopolitics Updated: The Strategy of Selective Engagement." *International Security* 23, no. 3 (1998/99): pp. 79-113.

Art, Robert J. "Selective Engagement in the Era of Austerity." In *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, edited by Richard Fontaine and Kristin M. Lord, pp. 13-28. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012.

Ash, Timothy Garton. "The New Rome is Not the New Greece Yet, But the U.S. Must Look to Its Laurels." *Guardian*, June 29, 2012. Accessed September 12, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/jun/29/america-must-look-to-its-laurels>.

Ashley, Richard. "The Achievements of Post-Structuralism." In *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, edited by Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski, pp. 240-253. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Associated Press. "Clinton: Obama 'Naive' on Foreign Policy." *NBC News*, July 24, 2007. Accessed June 10, 2014. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/19933710/ns/politics-the_debates/t/clinton-obama-naive-foreign-policy/#.U5bxLBYdsoE.

Associated Press. "Pentagon Provides for Hollywood." *USA Today*, May 29, 2001. Accessed July 5, 2013. <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/2001-05-17-pentagon-helps-hollywood.htm>.

Associated Press. "Report: Secret Drone Memo To Be Disclosed by Obama Administration." *Guardian*, May 20, 2014. Accessed May 27, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/drone-memo-disclose-obama-justice-department>.

Axe, David. "Pentagon, Hollywood Pair up for Transformers Sequel." *Wired*, December 29, 2008. Accessed August 21, 2012. <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2008/12/pentagon-holl-1/>.

Bacevich, Andrew J. *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Bacevich, Andrew J. *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008.

Bacevich, Andrew J., ed. *The Short American Century: A Postmortem*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Bacevich, Andrew. *Washington Rules*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.

Bacevich, Andrew. "We're Just Not That Special." *Politico*, March 5, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/03/american-exceptionalism-russia-ukraine-104318.html#.U43LExZJpOd>.

Baker, Peter. "In Cold War Echo, Obama Strategy Writes Off Putin." *New York Times*, April 19, 2014. Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/20/world/europe/in-cold-war-echo-obama-strategy-writes-off-putin.html>.

Baker, Peter. "Pivoting From a War Footing, Obama Acts to Curtail Drones." *New York Times*, May 23, 2013. Accessed May 23, 2014,

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/politics/pivoting-from-a-war-footing-obama-acts-to-curtail-drones.html?_r=0.

Baker, Peter. "Rebutting Critics, Obama Seeks Higher Bar for Military Action." *New York Times*, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/rebutting-critics-obama-seeks-higher-bar-for-military-action.html?rref=politics&module=Header&version=context®ion=Header&action=click&contentCollection=Politics&pgtype=article>.

Balz, Dan and Peyton M. Craighill. "'Poll: Americans Strongly Back Diplomatic Solution on Syria But Give Obama Low Marks'." *Washington Post*, September 17, 2013. Accessed April 28, 2014. http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-09-17/politics/42124841_1_chemical-weapons-61-percent-47-percent.

Barnes, Julian E., Ned Parker and John Horn. "The Hurt Locker Sets Off Conflict." *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 2010. Accessed July 13, 2013.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/25/entertainment/la-et-hurt-locker26-2010feb26>.

Barnett, Thomas P. M. *The Pentagon's New Map*. New York: Berkely Books, 2004.

Bartlett, Henry C. and Paul G. Holman. "Grand Strategy and the Structure of U.S. Military Forces." *Strategic Review* 20 (Spring 1992): pp. 39-51.

Bass, Gary J. "Endless War". *The Sunday Book Review*, September 3, 2010.

Beaucar Vlahos, Kelley. "One-Sided COIN." *American Conservative*, August 1, 2009. Accessed February 4, 2014.

<http://www.amconmag.com/article/2009/aug/01/00038/>.

Becker, Joe and Scott Shane. "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will." *New York Times*, May 29, 2012. Accessed May 23, 2014.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

Bender, Bryan. "Many D.C. Think Tanks Now Players in Partisan Wars." *Boston Globe*, August 11, 2013. Accessed April 11, 2014.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2013/08/10/brain-trust-for-sale-the-growing-footprint-washington-think-tank-industrial-complex/7ZifHfrLPlbz0bSeVOZHdI/story.html>.

Bengali, Shashank and Matea Gold Tribune. "Policy Ace Michele Flournoy Could Be First Female Defense Chief." *Stars and Stripes*, January 4, 2013. Accessed February 5, 2014. <http://www.stripes.com/news/us/policy-ace-michele-flournoy-could-be-first-female-pentagon-chief-1.202861>.

Bennett, John T. "Senate OKs Sequester-Relief Budget Plan." *Defense News*, December 18, 2013. Accessed February 6, 2014.

<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131218/DEFREG02/312180031/Senate-OKs-Sequester-Relief-Budget-Plan>.

Bergen, Peter. "Obama Says Goodbye to American Hubris." *CNN*, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/28/opinion/bergen-obama-doctrine-smart-power/>.

Betts, Richard K. "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose." In *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, edited by Richard Fontaine and Kristin M. Lord, pp. 29-42. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012.

Betts, Richard K. "What is Obama's 'Grand' Foreign Policy Strategy?" Council on Foreign Relations, April 16, 2013. Accessed January 24, 2014. <http://www.cfr.org/grand-strategy/obamas-grand-foreign-policy-strategy/p30457>.

"Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology." Pew Research Center. May 4, 2011. Accessed October 4, 2013. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/05/04/section-5-views-of-government-constitution-american-exceptionalism/>.

Biersteker, Thomas J. "Theory and Practice in International Security Studies." *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 6 (2010): pp. 599-608.

Birdsall, Nancy and Francis Fukuyama. "The Post-Washington Consensus." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 45-53.

Blake, Aaron. "The Republican Party Likes Rand Paul's Foreign Policy — At Least For Now." *Washington Post*, June 23, 2014. Accessed August 6, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/06/23/how-big-is-the-rand-paul-foreign-policy-wing-of-the-gop/>.

Blake, Aaron and Sean Sullivan. "Team America No Longer Wants To Be the World's Police." *Washington Post*, September 13, 2013. Accessed April 28, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/09/13/team-america-no-longer-wants-to-be-the-worlds-police/>.

Bonicelli, Paul. "Five Years is Long Enough to Wait for An Obama Grand Strategy." *Foreign Policy*, May 6, 2013. Accessed June 3, 2014. http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/06/five_years_is_long_enough_to_wait_for_an_obama_grand_strategy.

Bonura, Carlo J. Jr. "The Occulted Geopolitics of Nation and Culture." In *Rethinking Geopolitics*, edited by Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, pp. 86-105. London: Routledge, 1998, 90.

Boot, Max. "Think Again: Neocons." *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2004. Accessed October 15, 2013. <http://www.cfr.org/united-states/think-again-neocons/p7592>.

Booth, Ken. "Critical Explorations." In *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*, edited by Ken Booth, pp. 1-18. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner, 2005.

Booth, Ken, ed. *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner, 2005.

Bordwell, David. *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.

Bormann, Natalie and Michael Sheehan, eds. *Securing Outer Space: International Relations Theory and the Politics of Space*. London: Routledge, 2009.

“Box Office Mojo.” Accessed September 17, 2014. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com>.

Boyd-Barrett, Oliver, David Herrera, and Jim Baumann. *Hollywood and the CIA: Cinema, Defence, and Subversion*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Boyle, Michael. “Obama: 'Leading from Behind' on Libya.” *Guardian*, August 27, 2011. Accessed April 23, 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/aug/27/obama-libya-leadership-nato>.

Brands, Hal. *What Good is Grand Strategy: Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Vol. I*. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Bremmer, Ian. *Every Nation For Itself: What Happens When No One Leads the World*. London: Penguin, 2012.

Bremmer, Ian. “The Tragic Decline of American Foreign Policy.” *The National Interest*, April 16, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014.
<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-tragic-decline-american-foreign-policy-10264>.

Bremmer, Ian and Nouriel Roubini. “A G-Zero World.” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 2-7.

Brewster, David. “'Asian Pivot' Is Really An 'Asian Re-balance'.” *The Interpreter*, June 22, 2013. Accessed April 7, 2014.
<http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/06/22/asian-pivot-is-really-an-asian-rebalance.aspx?COLLCC=3789963749&>.

Brimley, Shawn. “Finding Our Way.” In *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, edited by Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimely, pp. 9-22. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2008.

Brimley, Shawn and Flournoy, Michèle A., eds. *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2008.

Brimley, Shawn and Michèle A. Flournoy. "Introduction." In *Finding Our Way: Debating American Grand Strategy*, edited by Shawn Brimley and Michèle A. Flournoy, pp. 5-8. Washington DC: CNAS, 2008.

Brimley, Shawn and Flournoy, Michèle A. "Making America Grand Again." In *Finding Our Way*, edited by Michèle A. Flournoy and Shawn Brimely, pp. 125-148. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2008.

Bruni, Frank. "America the Shrunken." *New York Times*, May 3, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/04/opinion/sunday/bruni-america-the-shrunken.html?_r=0.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "An Agenda for NATO." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 5 (2009): pp. 2-20.

Brzezinski, Zbigniew. "From Hope to Audacity." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (2010): pp.16-30.

Brezinski, Zbigniew. *Strategic Vision*. New York: Basic Books, 2012.

Brooks, Stephen G. and William C. Wohlforth. "Reshaping the World Order." *Foreign Affairs*, Affairs 88, no. 2 (2009): pp. 49-63.

Brooks, Stephen G. and William C. Wohlforth. *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Brooks, Stephen, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth. "Don't Come Home, America: The Case Against Retrenchment." *International Security* 37, no. 3 (2012): pp. 7-51.

Brooks, Stephen, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth. "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no.1 (2013): pp. 130-142.

"Brookings Institution History." Brookings. Accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/history>.

"Brookings Leadership." Brookings. Accessed February 13, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/about/leadership>.

Bower, Ernest Z. "Engagement in the Indo-Pacific: The Pentagon Leads by Example." Center for Strategic and International Studies. August 22, 2013. Accessed April 11, 2014. <http://csis.org/publication/engagement-indo-pacific-pentagon-leads-example>.

Buchanan, Patrick J. *Suicide of a Superpower: Will America Survive to 2025?* New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2011.

Bumiller, Elisabeth. "Obama Team Defends Policy on Afghanistan." *New York Times*, December 2, 2009. Accessed June 10, 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/03/world/asia/03policy.html>.

Bush, George W. "President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address." January 28, 2008. Accessed October 5, 2013. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/01/20080128-13.html>.

Buzan, Barry. *Peoples, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1983.

Campbell, David. "Beyond Choice: The Onto-politics of Critique." *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): pp. 127-134.

Campbell, David. *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992 (revised edition 1998).

Carpenter, Ted Galen. "Delusions of Indispensability." *The National Interest*, no. 124 (March/April 2013): pp. 47-55.

Carpenter, Ted Galen. "U.S. Security Retrenchment: The First Effects of a Modest Shift." CATO Institute. March 17, 2014. Accessed May 7, 2014,
<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/us-security-retrenchment-first-effects-modest-shift>.

Cassidy, John. "A Reluctant Realist at West Point." *New Yorker*, May 29, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.
<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/johncassidy/2014/05/a-reluctant-realist-at-west-point.html>.

Center for American Progress. *Sustainable Security 101*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2009.

Center for Strategic and International Studies. "Professional Military Education: An Asset for Peace and Progress." In *American Defense Policy*, edited by Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta, and Collins G. Shackelford, Jr., pp. 302-314. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Center for Strategic and International Studies. *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment*. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012.

Chait, Jonathan. "Liberalism's Bumper Sticker Problem." *New Republic*, April 28, 2011. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://www.newrepublic.com/blog/jonathan-chait/87553/liberalisms-bumper-sticker-problem>.

Child, Ben. "Kathryn Bigelow Denies White House Favouritism Over Bin Laden Film." *Guardian*, August 11, 2013. Accessed June 10, 2014.
<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/aug/11/kathryn-bigelow-bin-laden-film>.

Chotiner, Isaac. "The Surprisingly Left-Wing Politics of 'White House Down'." *New Republic*, June 28, 2013. Accessed August 12, 2014.
<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/113668/white-house-down-reviewed-isaac-chotiner>.

Clark, Ian. *Hegemony in International Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *Vom Kriege*. Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2005 (originally published 1832/1834).

Clinton, Hillary. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011. Accessed March 11, 2014.
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century.

Clinton, Hillary. "Leading Through Civilian Power." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): pp. 13-24.

CNN Wire Staff. "Mullen: Debt is Top National Security Threat." *CNN*. August 27, 2010. Accessed February 4, 2014.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/U.S./08/27/debt.security.mullen/>.

Cohen, Michael. "America Stands Accused of Retreat From its Global Duties. Nonsense." *Guardian*, April 12, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2014.
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/12/us-foreign-policy-retreatism-obama-accused-weakness>.

Cohen, Roger. "Leading from Behind." *New York Times*, October 31, 2011. Accessed April 23, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/01iht-edcohen01.html>.

Cohen, Roger. "Putin's Crimea Crime." *New York Times*, March 3, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/opinion/putins-crimean-crime.html?_r=0.

Colby, Elbridge and Paul Lettow. "Have We Hit Peak America?" *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2014. Accessed August 5, 2014.
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/07/03/have_we_hit_peak_america.

Collins, John M. *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1973.

Collins, Richard. "REVIEW: In Captain America: The Winter Soldier, The Enemy Is Us." *Time*, April 2, 2014. Accessed August 11, 2014. <http://time.com/46760/captain-america-the-winter-soldier-movie-review/>.

"Confidence in Obama Lifts U.S. Image Around the World." Pew Research Global Attitudes Project. July 23, 2009. Accessed May 22, 2014.
<http://www.pewglobal.org/2009/07/23/confidence-in-obama-lifts-us-image-around-the-world/>.

Congressional Budget Office. *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013*. Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2013.

Congressional Budget Office. *Estimated Impact of Automatic Budget Enforcement Procedures Specified in the Budget Control Act*. Washington DC: Congressional Budget Office, 2011.

Congressional Research Service. *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Toward Asia*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012.

Cooper, Helene. "Obama Takes Hard Line With Libya After Shift by Clinton." *New York Times*, March 18, 2011. Accessed April 23, 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/19/world/africa/19policy.html?pagewanted=all>.

Cooper, Helene. "On the World Stage, Obama Issues an Overture." *New York Times*, April 2, 2009. Accessed September 17, 2014.
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/03/world/europe/03assess.html?_r=0.

Cooper, Helene. "Putting Stamp on Afghan War, Obama Will Send 17,000 Troops." *New York Times*, February 17, 2009. Accessed May 22, 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/washington/18web-troops.html>.

Cooper, Michael. "McCain Sharpens His Foreign Policy Attacks on Obama." *New York Times*, June 3, 2008. Accessed June 10, 2014.
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/03/us/politics/03mccain.html?_r=0.

Cox, Robert. "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory." *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): pp. 126-155.

Craig, Campbell, Benjamin H. Friedman, Brendan Rittenhouse Green, Justin Logan, Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth. "Debating American Engagement: The Future of U.S. Grand Strategy." *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013): pp. 181-199.

Crandall, Russell. "The Post-American Hemisphere." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): pp. 83-95.

Croft, Stuart. *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Croft, Stuart and Terry Terriff, eds. *Critical Reflections on Security and Change*. Oxon, New York: Frank Cass, 2005.

Crowley, Michael. "This May Be the Real Obama Doctrine." *TIME*, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://time.com/120645/obama-west-point-doctrine-foreign-policy/>.

Crowley, Tony. *The Politics of Discourse*. London: Macmillan, 1989.

Child, Ben. "U.S. Film Industry Set For Four years of Strong Growth, Predicts Report." *Guardian*, June 14, 2012. Accessed August 8, 2014.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/jun/14/us-film-industry-growth-forecast>.

Dalby, Simon. "American Security Discourse: The Persistence of Geopolitics." *Political Geography Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1990): pp. 171-188.

Dalby, Simon. "Calling 911: Geopolitics, Security and America's New War." *Geopolitics* 8, no. 3 (2003): pp. 61-86.

Dalby, Simon. *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1990.

Dalby, Simon. "Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 3 (1991): pp. 261-283.

Dalby, Simon. "Imperialism, Domination, Culture: The Continued Relevance of Critical Geopolitics." *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (2008): pp. 413-436.

Dalby, Simon. "Warrior Geopolitics: Gladiator, Black Hawk Down and The Kingdom Of Heaven." *Political Geography* 27, no. 4 (2008): pp. 439-455.

Dale, Catherine. *The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and Defense Strategy: Issues for Congress*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014.

Dale, Catherine and Pat Towell. *In Brief: Assessing the January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG)*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013.

Debrix, François. *Tabloid Terror: War, Culture and Geopolitics*. Abingdon and New York: 2008, Routledge.

DeGroot, Gerard. "Andrew Bacevich's 'Washington Rules' and John Dower's 'Cultures of War.'" *The Washington Post*, September 12, 2010. Accessed March 04, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/10/AR2010091003604.html>.

Der Derian, James. "Decoding The National Security Strategy of the United States of America." *Boundary 2*, no. 30 (2003): pp. 19-27.

Der Derian, James. *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network*. 2nd ed. Boulder: Westview Press, 2001.

Der Derian, James and Michael Shapiro, eds. *International/Intertextual Relations*. New York: Lexington Books, 1989.

Desch, Michael C. "The Keys That Lock Up the World." *International Security* 14, no. 1 (1989): pp. 86-121.

Dijkink, Gertjan. *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Dijkink, Gertjan and Virginie Mamadouh. "Geopolitics, International Relations and Political Geography: The Politics of Geopolitical Discourse." *Geopolitics* 11 (2006): pp. 349-366.

DiMaggio, Anthony. *The Rise of the Tea Party: Political Discontent and Corporate Media in the Age of Obama*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011.

Diner, Dan. "Knowledge of Expansion on the Geopolitics of Karl Haushofer." *Geopolitics* 4, no. 3 (1999): pp. 161-188.

Dittmer, Jason. "American Exceptionalism, Visual Effects, and the Post-9/11 Cinematic Superhero Boom." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 1 (2011): pp. 114-130.

Dittmer, Jason. "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95, no. 3 (2005): pp. 626-643.

Dittmer, Jason. *Popular Culture, Geopolitics and Identity*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010.

Dittmer, Jason and Klaus Dodds K. "Popular Geopolitics Past and Future: Fandom, Identities and Audiences." *Geopolitics* 13, no. 3 (2008): pp. 437-457.

Dempsey, Martin E. "From the Chairman." *Joint Forces Quarterly* 66 (3rd quarter 2012): pp. 2-3.

Denmark, Abraham M. "Managing the Global Commons." *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2010): pp. 165-182.

Dodds, Klaus. "Gender, Geopolitics, and Contemporary Representations of National Security." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 38, no. 1 (2010): pp. 21-33.

Dodds, Klaus. *Geopolitics in a Changing World*. Harlow, Essex: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Dodds, Klaus. "Hollywood and the Popular Geopolitics of the War on Terror." *Third World Quarterly* 29, no. 8 (2008): pp. 1624-1625.

Dodds, Klaus. "The 1982 Falklands War and a Critical Geopolitical Eye: Steve Bell and the If. . . Cartoons." *Political Geography* 15, no. 6-7 (1996): pp. 571-592.

Doherty, Patrick. "A New U.S. Grand Strategy." *Foreign Policy*, January 9, 2013. Accessed August 6, 2014.
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/09/a_new_U.S._grand_strategy.

Donilon, Tom. "America is Back in the Pacific and Will Uphold the Rules." *Financial Times*, November 27, 2011. Accessed March 11, 2014.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4f3febac-1761-11e1-b00e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2vIVeZcC4>.

Dowd, Maureen. "Is Barry Whiffing?" *New York Times*, April 29, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/opinion/dowd-is-barry-whiffing.html>.

Downs, Erica and Suzanne Maloney. "Getting China to Sanction Iran," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 15-21.

Draezen, Yochi J. "Obama Dips Into Think Tank for Talent." *Wall Street Journal*, November 17, 2008. Accessed February 6, 2014. <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB122688537606232319>.

Drake, Bruce. "Obama Charts a New Foreign Policy Course For a Public That Wants the Focus To Be At home." Pew Research Center, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/05/28/obama-charts-a-new-foreign-policy-course-for-a-public-that-wants-the-focus-to-be-at-home/>.

Drezner, Daniel W. "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (2011): pp. 57-67.

Drezner, Daniel W. "Five Things I Think I Think About U.S. Foreign Policy After Obama's West Point Speech." *Washington Post*, June 2, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/06/02/five-things-i-think-i-think-about-american-foreign-policy-after-obamas-west-point-speech/>.

Drezner, Daniel W. "Military Primacy Doesn't Pay (Nearly As Much As You Think)." *International Security* 38, no. 1 (2013): pp. 52-79.

D'Souza, Dinesh. *Obama's America: Unmaking the American Dream*. Washington DC: Regnery, 2012.

Dueck, Colin. "Realism, Culture and Grand Strategy: Explaining America's Peculiar Path to World Power." *Security Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005): pp. 195-231.

Dueck, Colin. *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture and Change in American Grand Strategy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

Duss, Matthew. "The Isolationists Are Coming!" *The American Prospect*, May 2, 2013. Accessed January 21, 2014. <http://prospect.org/article/isolationists-are-coming>.

Eaglen, Mackenzie. "The Sequester Is Here To Stay - Now the Military Needs To Get To Work." *Fox News*, May 8, 2013. Accessed February 6, 2014. <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2013/05/08/sequester-is-here-to-stay-now-military-needs-to-get-to-work/>.

Earle, Edward Mead, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Economy, Elizabeth C. "The Game Changer." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): pp. 142-152.

Editorial Board. "President Obama and the World." *New York Times*, May 3, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2014.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/04/opinion/sunday/president-obama-and-the-world.html>.

Editorial Board. "President Obama Continues His Retreat from Afghanistan." *Washington Post*, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obama-continues-his-retreat-from-afghanistan/2014/05/27/ae01686e-e5c2-11e3-8f90-73e071f3d637_story.html.

Editorial Board, "President Obama's Foreign Policy is Based on Fantasy."

Washington Post, March 3, 2014. Accessed May 5, 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obamas-foreign-policy-is-based-on-fantasy/2014/03/02/c7854436-a238-11e3-a5fa-55f0c77bf39c_story.html.

Editorial Board. "President Obama Misses a Chance on Foreign Affairs." *New York Times*, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/opinion/president-obama-misses-a-chance-on-foreign-affairs.html?_r=0.

Editorial Board. "The End of the Perpetual War." *New York Times*, May 23, 2013.

Accessed August 18, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/opinion/obama-vows-to-end-of-the-perpetual-war.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

Edkins, Jenny. "Ethics and Practices of Engagement: Intellectuals as Experts." *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): pp. 64-69.

Edkins, Jenny. "Post-structuralism." In *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century: An Introduction*, edited by Martin Griffiths, pp. 88-98. London, New York: Routledge, 2007.

Edkins, Jenny. *Post-structuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999.

Edwards-Levy, Ariel. "Americans Think Putin Has Been More Effective Than Obama on Syria." *Huffington Post*, September 27, 2013. Accessed April 28, 2014.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/27/putin-obama-syria_n_4002351.html.

Edwards III., George C. and William G. Howell, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Entous, Adam and Phil Stewart. "Exclusive: The Warrior-Scholar Versus the Taliban." *Reuters*, June 25, 2010. Accessed May 7, 2014.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/06/25/us-petraeus-idU.S.TRE65OOR820100625>.

Erlanger, Steven. "Iran and Six Powers Agree on Terms for Nuclear Talks." *New York Times*, February 20. Accessed May 21, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/21/world/middleeast/iran.html>.

Ewing, Philip. "The Military-Industrial-Entertainment Complex." *DoD Buzz*, 23 May, 2012. Accessed July 16, 2013. <http://www.dodbuzz.com/2012/05/23/the-military-industrial-congressional-entertainment-complex/>.

Fakiolas, Efstathios T. and Tassos Fakiolas. "Pax Americana or Multilateralism? Reflecting on the United States' Grand Strategic Vision of Hegemony in the Wake of the 11 September Attacks." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (2007): pp. 53-86.

Feaver, Peter. "American Grand Strategy at the Crossroads: Leading from the Front, Leading from Behind or Not Leading At All." In *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, edited by Richard Fontaine and Kristin M. Lord, pp. 59-71. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012.

Ferguson, Niall. *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

Ferguson, Niall. *The War of the World: History's Age of Hatred*. London: Penguin, 2007.

Ferrill, Arthur. *Roman Imperial Grand Strategy*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1991.

Flint, Colin and Peter J. Taylor. *Political Geography: World Economy, Nation-State, and Locality*. 2nd ed. Essex: Longman, 1989.

Flournoy, Michèle and Janine Davidson. "Obama's New Global Posture." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 4 (2012): pp. 54-63.

Flynn, Michael. "The War Hawks." *The Chicago Tribune*, April 13, 2003. Accessed January 21, 2013. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-04-13/news/0304130427_1_iraq-william-kristol-benevolent-hegemony.

Fontaine, Richard and Kirstin M. Lord, eds. *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012.

Fontaine, Richard and Kirstin M. Lord. "Introduction: Debating America's Future." In *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, edited by Richard Fontaine and Kristin M. Lord, pp. 3-12. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012.

Forbes, Randy. "America's Pacific Air-Sea Battle Vision." *The Diplomat*, March 8, 2012. Accessed November 20, 2013. <http://thediplomat.com/2012/03/americas-pacific-air-sea-battle-vision/>.

Foreign Policy Initiative, American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation. *Defending Defense: Defense Spending, the Super Committee and the*

Price of Greatness. Washington DC: Foreign Policy Institute, American Enterprise Institute, and The Heritage Foundation, 2011.

Forsberg, Tuomas. "The Ground Without Foundation: Territory as a Social Construct." *Geopolitics* 8, no. 2 (2003): pp. 7-24.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books, 1977.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon, 1977.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1972.

Foucault, Michel. "What is Critique." In *The Politics of Truth*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, pp. 41-82. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007.

Foucault, Michel, and François Ewald. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. London: Macmillan, 2003.

Foundas, Scott. "Film Review: 'Captain America: The Winter Soldier.'" *Variety*, March 20, 2014. Accessed August 11, 2014.

<http://variety.com/2014/film/reviews/film-review-captain-america-the-winter-soldier-1201139253/>.

Franke, David. "'White House Down'—What a Waste." *The American Conservative*, June 28, 2014. Accessed August 12, 2014.

<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/white-house-down-what-a-waste/>.

Freedman, Lawrence. *Strategy: A History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Friedberg, Aaron L. *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York and London: Norton, 2011.

Friedman, Benjamin H. and Christopher Preble. "Americans Favor Not Isolationism But Restraint." *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 2013. Accessed June 3, 2014.

<http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/americans-favor-not-isolationism-restraint>.

Friedman, Benjamin H. and Christopher Preble. *Budgetary Savings from Military Restraint*. Washington DC: CATO, 2010.

Friedman, George. *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century*. New York: Doubleday, 2009.

Friedman, George. *The Next Decade: Empire and Republic in a Changing World*. New York: Doubleday, 2011.

Friedman, Thomas L. and Michael Mandelbaum. *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

Fry, Robert (Brigadier). "End of the Continental Century." *RUSI Journal* 143, no. 3 (1998): pp. 15-18.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press, 1992.

Gaddis, John Lewis. *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Gallup. *The U.S.-Global Leadership Project*. Washington DC: Gallup, 2013.

Gans, John A. Jr. "'This Is 50-50': Behind Obama's Decision to Kill Bin Laden." *Atlantic*, October 10, 2012. Accessed May 27, 2014.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/this-is-50-50-behind-obamas-decision-to-kill-bin-laden/263449/>.

Garnett, John. "Strategic Studies and its Assumptions." In *Contemporary Strategy: Theories and Policies*, edited by John Baylis, Ken Booth, John Garnett, and Phil Williams, pp. 3-21. London: Croom Helm, 1975.

Gates, Robert M. "A Balanced Strategy." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): pp. 28-40.

Gates, Robert M. *Duty*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014.

Gates, Robert M. "Helping Others to Defend Themselves." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): pp. 2-6.

Gelb, Leslie H. "In Defense of Leading from Behind." *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2013. Accessed September 24, 2014.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/29/in_defense_of_leading_from_behind.

Gelb, Leslie H. "Necessity, Choice, and Common Sense." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 3 (2009): 56-72.

George, Larry N. "Pharmacotic War and the Ethical Dilemmas of Engagement." *International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2005): pp. 115-125.

Gerson, Michael. "Obama's Foreign Policy and the Risks of Retreat." *Washington Post*, March 19, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-obamas-foreign-policy-and-the-risks-of-retreat/2013/03/18/526e9ad6-8ffa-11e2-bdea-e32ad90da239_story.html.

Giglio, Ernest. *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film, and Politics*. 3rd ed. New York: Peterland, 2010.

"Global Trends." National Intelligence Council. Accessed April 4, 2014.

<http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-what-we-do>.

Golan-Vilella, Robert. "The Results of Threat Inflation." *National Interest*, March 1, 2013. Accessed May 7, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-results-threat-inflation-8175>.

Goldberg, Jeffrey. "Obama's Crystal-Clear Promise to Stop Iran From Getting a Nuclear Weapon." *Atlantic*, October 2, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2014.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/obamas-crystal-clear-promise-to-stop-iran-from-getting-a-nuclear-weapon/262951/>.

Goldgeier, James. "The 'Russia Reset' Was Already Dead; Now It's Time for Isolation." *Washington Post*, March 2, 2014. Accessed May 21, 2014.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/02/the-russia-reset-was-already-dead-now-its-time-for-isolation/>.

Goldstein, Avery. "China's Real and Present Danger." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2013): pp. 136-144.

Goldstein, Avery. *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

"Government Spending Chart." U.S. Government Spending. Accessed September 17, 2014.

http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/spending_chart_2004_2018U.S.r_09s1li111mcn_30f.

Gray, Colin. "In Defence of the Heartland: Sir Halford Mackinder and His Critics a Hundred Years On." *Comparative Strategy* 23, no. 1 (2004): pp. 9-25.

Gray, Colin S. *Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011.

Gray, Colin S. *Modern Strategy*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Gray, Colin S. *Nuclear Strategy and National Style*. London: Hamilton Press, 1986.

Gray, Colin S. "Strategic Culture as Context: The First Generation Strikes Back." *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): pp. 49-69.

Gray, Colin S. *The Geopolitics of Super Power*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988.

Gray, Colin S. *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Green, Brendan Rittenhouse. "Two Concepts of Liberty: U.S. Cold War Grand Strategies and the Liberal Tradition." *International Security* 37, no. 2 (2012): pp. 9-43.

Green, Michael J. *Rethinking U.S. Military Presence in Asia and the Pacific*. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012.

Guertner, Gary L. "European Views of Preemption in U.S. National Security Strategy." *The U.S. Army Professional Writing Collection* 5 (2007/2008). Accessed March 14, 2014.
http://www.army.mil/professionalWriting/volumes/volume5/august_2007/8_07_2.html.

Haas, Richard. "America Can Take a Breather. And It Should." *New York Times*, June 22, 2013. Accessed January 24, 2014.
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/23/opinion/sunday/america-can-take-a-breather-and-it-should.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2&.

Haas, Richard N. "The Restoration Doctrine." *The American Interest*, December 9, 2011. Accessed January 28, 2014. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/articles/2011/12/9/the-restoration-doctrine/>.

Hagel, Chuck. "Remarks by Secretary Hagel at the IISS Asia Security Summit." June 1, 2013. Accessed April 11, 2014.
<http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5251>.

Haggman, Bertil. "Rudolf Kjellén and Modern Swedish Geopolitics." *Geopolitics* 3, no. 2 (1998): pp. 99-112.

Hansen, Lene. *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Hart, Basil Liddell. *Strategy*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967.

Harvey, David. *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. Edinburgh: University Press, 2001.

Hastings, Michael. *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan*. New York: Penguin, 2012.

Hastings, Michael. "The Runaway General." *Rolling Stone*, June 22, 2010. Accessed May 7, 2014. <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-runaway-general-20100622>.

Haushofer, Karl. *Weltpolitik von Heute*. Berlin: Zeitgeschichte, 1934.

Hayes, Stephen F. "Condi Rice Blasts Obama on Weakness, Leadership." *The Weekly Standard*. March 27, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014.
http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/condi-rice-blasts-obama-weakness-leadership_786123.html.

Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Heilbrunn, Jacob. "Barack Obama Misfires at West Point." *National Interest*, May 29, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/obamas-west-point-speech-10552>.

Herman, Arthur. "America's Disarmed Future." *National Review Online*, January 6, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2014. <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/287320/america-s-disarmed-future-arthur-herman>.

Hill, Charles. *Grand Strategies*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2010.

Hirsh, Michael. "Clinton Legacy: How Will History Judge the Soft-power Secretary of State." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 3 (2013): pp. 82-91.

Hodge, Nathan. "The Nation: Who Drives The Think Tanks?" *NPR*, March 17, 2010. Accessed February 2014. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124760902>.

Hollywood and the Pentagon: A Dangerous Liaison. Documentary. Directed by Maria Pia Moscaro. 2003. Canada: Baseline, 2010. Online. Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3r20a7nHpnY>.

"Hollywood and the War Machine." *Empire*. Al Jazeera. August 9, 2012. Accessed August 12, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2010/12/2010121681345363793.html>

Hooker, William. *Carl Schmitt's International Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Hooson, David, ed. *Geography and National Identity*. Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994.

Hornaday, Ann. "'Captain America: The Winter Soldier's Review: Maybe the Most Grown-up Avengers Movie Yet.'" *Washington Post*, April 3, 2014. Accessed August 11, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/movies/captain-america-the-winter-soldier-review-maybe-the-most-grown-up-avengers-movie-yet/2014/04/03/89bad3d8-ba60-11e3-9a05-c739f29ccb08_story.html.

Horowitz, Jason. "Events in Iraq Open Door for Interventionist Revival, Historian Says." *New York Times*, June 15, 2014. Accessed July 29, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/us/politics/historians-critique-of-obama-foreign-policy-is-brought-alive-by-events-in-iraq.html?_r=0.

Huntington, Samuel. *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004.

Ignatieff, Michael. "American Empire; The Burden." *New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003.

Ikenberry, John G. *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Ikenberry, John G. "American Grand Strategy in the Age of Terror," *Survival* 43, no. 4 (2001): pp. 19-34.

Ikenberry, John G. "American Power and the Empire of Capitalist Democracy." *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 5 (2001): pp. 191-212.

Ikenberry, G. John. "The Future of the Liberal World Order." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011): pp. 56-68.

Ikenberry, Karl W. "The Limits of Counter-Insurgency in Afghanistan: The Other Side of the COIN." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2013): pp. 59-74.

Inboden, Will. "When Asian Leaders See Obama, They See Syria and Ukraine." *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2014. Accessed May 7, 2014.
http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2014/04/23/obama_should_be_thinking_about_kennan_this_week.

Indyk, Martin S., Kenneth G. Lieberthal, and Michael E. O'Hanlon. *Bending History: Barack Obama's Foreign Policy*. Washington DC: Brookings, 2012.

Indyk, Martin S., Kenneth G. Lieberthal, and Michael E. O'Hanlon. "Scoring Obama's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 3 (2012): pp. 29-43.

Ingraham, Laura. *The Obama Diaries*. Chicago: Threshold Editions, 2010.

"Intelligence Community." Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI). Accessed April 4, 2014. <http://www.dni.gov/index.php>.

"Iran Agrees to Curb Nuclear Activity at Geneva Talks." *BBC News*. November 24, 2013. Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25074729>.

"Isolationism." CATO Institute. Accessed January 22, 2014.
<http://www.cato.org/pages/isolationism>.

Itzkoff, Dave. "You Saw What In 'Avatar'? Pass Those Glasses!" *New York Times*, January 20, 2010. Accessed November 15, 2012.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/20/movies/20avatar.html>.

Jaffe, Greg. "U.S. Model For a Future War Fans Tensions with China and Inside Pentagon." *Washington Post*, August 1, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2014.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-model-for-a-future-war-fans-tensions-with-china-and-inside-pentagon/2012/08/01/gJQAC6F8PX_story.html.

“James Cameron: ‘Avatar’ Is Political But It’s Not Un-American.” *The Huffington Post*, March 18, 2010. Accessed October 12, 2012.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/14/james-cameron-avatar-is-p_n_423068.html.

Jepperson, Ronald L., Alexander Wendt, and Peter J. Katzenstein. “Norms, Identity, and Culture in National Security.” In *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, edited by Peter J. Katzenstein, pp. 33-78. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Jisi, Wang. “China’s Search for a Grand Strategy.” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 68-79.

Joffe, Josef. “The Default Power.” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): pp. 21-35.

Johnson, Chalmers. *Dismantling The Empire: America’s Last Best Hope*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.

Johnston, Alastair Iain. *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Johnston, Alastair Ian. “Thinking About Strategic Culture.” *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995): pp. 32-64.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Vision 2020*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *The National Military Strategy of the United States*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2011.

Jones, Bruce, Thomas Wright, and Jane Esberg. *Reviving American Leadership: The Next President Should Continue on the Path Obama Has Set*. Washington DC: Brookings, 2012.

Jones, Richard Wyn. *Security, Strategy, and Critical Theory*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner, 1999.

“Judicial Watch Obtains Department of Defense and CIA Records Detailing Meetings With Bin Laden Raid Filmmakers.” Judicial Watch, May 22, 2012. Accessed June 10, 2014. <http://www.judicialwatch.org/press-room/press-releases/13421/>.

Judis, John B. “Speak Loudly and Carry a Small Stick.” *New Republic*, March 12, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/116988/barack-obama-foreign-policy-speak-loudly-and-carry-small-stick>.

Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. London: Pimlico, 2007.

Kagan, Robert. “Not Fade Away: Against the Myth of American Decline.” *The New Republic*, January 11, 2012. Accessed August 4, 2014.

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/politics/magazine/99521/america-world-power-declinism>.

Kagan, Robert. "President Obama's Foreign Policy Paradox." *Washington Post* March 27, 2014. Accessed April 28, 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/president-obamas-foreign-policy-paradox/2014/03/26/c5284c2e-b4f8-11e3-8cb6-284052554d74_story.html.

Kagan, Robert. "Superpowers Don't Get to Retire." *New Republic*, May 26, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/117859/allure-normalcy-what-america-still-owes-world>.

Kagan, Robert. "The Benevolent Empire." *Foreign Affairs* 111 (1998): pp. 24-35.

Kagan, Robert. *The World America Made*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012.

Kagan, Robert and William Kristol. "Statement of Principles." Project for the New American Century. June 3, 1997. Accessed January 21, 2014.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070810113753/www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>.

Kakutani, Michiko. "Surveying a Global Power Shift." *New York Times*, January 30, 2012.

Kaplan, Robert D. "Center Stage for the Twenty-First Century." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): pp. 16-32.

Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. New York: Random House, 2012.

Kaplan, Robert D. "Why John J. Mearsheimer Is Right (About Some Things)." *Atlantic*, January/February 2012. Accessed October 24, 2013.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/01/why-john-j-mearsheimer-is-right-about-some-things/308839>.

Katzenstein, Peter J., ed. *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Katzenstein, Peter J., Robert O. Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner. "International Organization and the Study of World Politics." *International Organization* 52, no. 2 (1998): pp. 645-685.

Kaufman, Stuart J. "U.S. National Strategy from Bush to Obama: Continuity and Change." In *National Security Under the Obama Administration*, edited by Bahram M. Rajee and Mark J. Miller, p. 11-28. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.

Kazianis, Harry. "Air-Sea Battle 2.0: A Global A2/AD Response." *The Diplomat*, November 14, 2013. Accessed November 20, 2013.

<http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/air-sea-battle-2-0-a-global-a2ad-response/>.

Kearns, Gerry. *Geopolitics and Empire: The Legacy of Halford Mackinder*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Kearns, Gerry. "Naturalising Empire: Echoes of Mackinder for the Next American Century?" *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): pp. 74-98.

Keegan, Rebecca. "'Act of Valor' Must Balance Publicity, Secrecy with Navy SEALs." *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 2012. Accessed August 21, 2012. <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/feb/12/entertainment/la-ca-act-of-valor-20120212>.

Kellner, Douglas. *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Kellner, Douglas. *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Post-Modern*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Kelly, Phil. "A Critique of Critical Geopolitics." *Geopolitics* 11, no. 1 (2006): pp. 24-53.

Kennan, George F. "Containment Then and Now." *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 4 (1987): pp. 885-890.

Kennan, George F. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." *Foreign Affairs* 26, no. 2 (1947): pp. 566-582.

Kennedy, Caroline. "The Manichean Temptation: Moralising Rhetoric and the Invocation of Evil in U.S. Foreign Policy." *International Politics* 50, no. 5 (2013): pp. 623-638.

Kennedy, Paul. *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*. New Haven, London: Yale University Press: 1991.

Kennedy, Paul. *Strategy and Diplomacy, 1870-1945: Eight Studies*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1983.

Kennedy, Paul. "The Influence and Limitations of Sea Power." *The International History Review* 10, no. 1 (1988): pp. 2-17.

Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Power from 1500 to 2000*. New York: Random House, 1987.

Keohane, Robert. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Kerry, John. "Opening Remarks Before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations." March 13, 2014. Accessed June 16, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2014/03/223414.htm>.

Kershaw, Ian. *Hitler 1889-1945: Nemesis*. London: Penguin, 2008.

Khanna, Parag. *The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order: How Emerging Powers Are Redefining Global Competition in the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Random House, 2008.

Kissinger, Henry A. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Kissinger, Henry A. "The Future of U.S.-China Relations." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (2012): pp. 44-53.

Klein, Bradley S. "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics." *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): pp. 133-148.

Klein, Bradley S. "The Textual Strategies of the Military: Have You Read Any Good Defense Manuals Lately?" In *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, edited by James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro, pp. 97-112. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989.

Kohut, Andrew. "Americans: Disengaged, Feeling Less Respected, But Still See U.S. as World's Military Superpower." Pew Research Center. April 1, 2014. Accessed August 7, 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/01/americans-disengaged-feeling-less-respected-but-still-see-u-s-as-worlds-military-superpower/>.

Korb, Lawrence J. "The Right Cuts." *National Interest*, January 25, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/obamas-overblown-defense-reductions-6379>.

Korb, Lawrence, Sean Duggan, and Laura Conley. *Integrating Security*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2009.

Korb, Lawrence J., Alex Rothman, and Max Hoffman. *\$100 Billion in Politically Feasible Defense Cuts for a Budget Deal*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2012.

Korb, Lawrence J., Max Hoffman, and Kate Blakeley. "Hagel's Defense Cuts: A Good Idea." *National Interest*, April 30, 2014. Accessed May 7, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/hagels-defense-cuts-good-idea-10322>.

Krause, Keith and Michael C. Williams, eds. *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Strategies*. London, New York: Routledge, 1997.

Krauthammer, Charles. "How Fractured is the GOP?" *Washington Post*, August 1, 2013. Accessed January 21, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/charles-krauthammer-how-fractured-is-the-gop/2013/08/01/6fd6f816-fada-11e2-9bde-7ddaa186b751_story.html.

Krauthammer, Charles. "Krauthammer: Obama Doctrine Forged in Retreat." *Boston Herald*, June 1, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.

http://bostonherald.com/news_opinion/opinion/op_ed/2014/05/krauthammer_obama_doctrine_forged_in_retreat.

Krauthammer, Charles. "The Obama Doctrine: Leading from Behind." *Washington Post*, April 28, 2011. Accessed April 23, 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html.

Krepinevich Jr., Andrew F. "Strategy in a Time of Austerity." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2012): pp. 58-69.

Krepinevich Jr., Andrew F. "The Pentagon's Wasting Assets." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009): pp. 18-33.

Krepinevich Jr., Andrew F. *Why AirSea Battle?* Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010.

Kristol, William and Robert Kagan. "Toward a Reaganite Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (1996): pp.18-32.

Kuhnenn, Jim. "Obama Faces 'New Chapter' of American Foreign Policy."

Huffington Post, March 17, 2014. Accessed June 10, 2014.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/17/obama-foreign-policy_n_4981654.html.

Kupchan, Charles A. "After Pax Americana: Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity." *International Security* 23, no. 2 (1998): pp. 40-79.

Kupchan, Charles A. "Enemies Into Friends." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2010): pp. 120-135.

Kupchan, Charles A. "Grand Strategy: The Four Pillars of the Future." *Democracy Journal*, no. 23 (Winter 2012). Accessed August 4, 2014.

<http://www.democracyjournal.org/23/grand-strategy-the-four-pillars-of-the-future.php?page=all>.

Kupchan, Charles A. "NATO's Final Frontier: Why Russia Should Join the Atlantic Alliance." *Foreign Affairs* 80, no. 3 (2010): pp. 100-113.

Kupchan, Charles A. *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Kyl, Jon and Jim Talent. "A Strong and Focused National Security Strategy."

American Enterprise Institute, October 31, 2013. Accessed June 16, 2014.

<http://www.aei.org/papers/foreign-and-defense-policy/defense/a-strong-and-focused-national-security-strategy/>.

Lacoste, Yves. *La Géographie ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre*. Paris: Maspéro, 1976.

Lacy, Mark J. "War, Cinema, and Moral Anxiety." *Alternatives* 28, no. 5 (2003): pp. 611-636.

LaFeber, Walter. *America, Russia, and the Cold War: 1945–1996*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1997.

Landler, Mark. "Ending Asia Trip, Obama Defends His Foreign Policy." *New York Times*, April 28, 2014. Accessed May 7, 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/29/world/obama-defends-foreign-policy-against-critics.html>.

Landler, Mark. "Obama Says Iran Strike Is an Option, but Warns Israel." *New York Times*, March 2, 2012. Accessed May 21, 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/03/world/middleeast/obama-says-military-option-on-iran-not-a-bluff.html?pagewanted=all>.

Larison, Daniel. "Noninterventionism: A Primer." *American Conservative*, June 11, 2014. Accessed August 6, 2014.
<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/noninterventionism-a-primer/>.

Larison, Daniel. "The Cliches of 'Leadership' and 'Resolve'." *American Conservative*, March 3, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014.
<http://www.theamericanconservative.com/larison/the-cliches-of-leadership-and-resolve/>.

Layne, Christopher. *Peace of Illusion: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006.

Layne, Christopher. "The (Almost) Triumph of Offshore Balancing." *National Interest*, January 27, 2012. Accessed August 6, 2014.
<http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/almost-triumph-offshore-balancing-6405>.

Layne, Christopher. "The End of Pax Americana: How Western Decline Became Inevitable." *The Atlantic*, April 26, 2012. Accessed October 24, 2013.
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/the-end-of-pax-americana-how-western-decline-became-inevitable/256388/>.

Layne, Christopher. "The Waning of U.S. Hegemony – Myth or Reality? A Review Essay." *International Security* 34, no. 1 (2009): pp. 147-172.

Lee, Oliver M. "The Geopolitics of America's Strategic Culture." *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 3 (2008): pp. 267-286.

Leffler, Melvyn P. "9/11 in Retrospect." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): pp. 33-43.

Legg, Stephen, ed. *Spatiality, Sovereignty and Carl Schmitt: Geographies of the Nomos*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Lego, Jeffrey and Andrew Moravcsik. "Is Anybody Still a Realist?" *International Security* 42, no. 2 (1999): pp. 5-55.

Leonard, Mark. "Why Convergence Breeds Conflict." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5 (2013): pp.125-135.

Lewis, Paul. "Most Americans Think U.S. Should 'Mind Its Own Business' Abroad, Survey Finds," *Guardian*, December 3, 2013. Accessed August 6, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/03/american-public-mind-its-own-business-survey>.

Lieberman, Joseph I. and Jon Kyl. "The Danger of Repeating the Cycle of American Isolationism." *Washington Post*, April 26, 2013. Accessed: January 21, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-repeating-the-cycle-of-american-isolationism/2013/04/25/16da45f8-a90c-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f_story.html.

Linklater, Andrew. *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations*. London: MacMillan, 1990.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-edged Sword*. New York: Norton, 1996.

Lipson, Charles. "America's Meltdown Abroad." *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 2014. Accessed June 1, 2014. http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2014-05-20/opinion/ct-america-standing-overseas-europe-lipson-oped-05-20140520_1_john-kerry-achievement-balance-sheet.

Liu, Henry C. K. "Brzezinski's G-2 Grand Strategy." *Asia Times*, April 22, 2009. Accessed March 3, 2013. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China_Business/KD22Cb01.html.

Lizza, Ryan. "Leading from Behind." *New Yorker*, April 27, 2011. Accessed September 17, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/04/leading-from-behind-obama-clinton.html>.

Lizza, Ryan. "The Consequentialist. How the Arab Spring Remade Obama's Foreign Policy." *New Yorker*, May 2, 2011. Accessed June 3, 2014. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza?currentPage=all.

Logan, Justin. *China, America, and the Pivot to Asia*. Washington DC: CATO, 2013.

Logan, Justin. "Rand Paul is No Isolationist." *Politico*, August 7, 2013. Accessed January 21, 2014. <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/08/rand-paul-is-no-isolationist-95286.html>.

Londoño, Ernesto. "The Last Casualties: As a Long War Ends, Risks Still Prove Real." *Washington Post*, March 4, 2014. Accessed May 5, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-last-casualties-as-a-long-war-ends-risks-still-prove-real/2014/03/04/55905998-8a90-11e3-a5bd-844629433ba3_story.html.

Lowenthal, Abraham F. "Obama and the Americas." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2010): pp. 110-124.

Lozada, Carlos. "Setting Priorities for the Afghan War." *Washington Post*, June 7, 2009. Accessed February 5, 2014.
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060501967.html>.

Luce, Edward. *Time to Start Thinking: America and the Specter of Decline*. London: Little, Brown, 2012.

MacAskill, Ewen. "Barack Obama Ends the War in Iraq. 'Now It's Time to Turn the Page'." *Guardian*, September 1, 2010. Accessed May 22, 2014.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/01/obama-formally-ends-iraq-war>.

MacDonald, Paul K. and Joseph M. Parent. "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment." *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011): pp. 7-44.

Mackinder, Halford. *Democratic Ideals & Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. London: Constable & Company, 1917.

Mackinder, Halford. *Geography as an Aid to Statecraft*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.

Mackinder, Halford. "The Geographical Pivot of History." *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): pp. 421-437.

Mackinder, Halford. "The Round World and the Winning of the Peace." *Foreign Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1943): pp. 595-605.

Maddow, Rachel. *Drift: The Unmooring of American Military Power*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2012.

Madsen, Deborah. *American Exceptionalism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Mahan, Alfred. *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*. London: Samson, 1890.

Mahnken, Thomas G. *Asia in the Balance*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2012.

Mamadouh, Virginie and Gertjan Dijkink. "Geopolitics, International Relations and Political Geography: The Politics of Geopolitical Discourse." *Geopolitics* 11, no. 3 (2006): pp. 349-366.

Mandelbaum, Michael. "Review Essay. Overpowered?" *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): pp. 114-119.

- Mandelbaum, Michael. *The Frugal Superpower*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2011.
- Mann, James. *The Obamians: The Struggle Inside the White House to Redefine American Power*. New York: Penguin, 2012.
- Mann, James and Jim Mann. *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*. London: Penguin, 2004.
- Marshall, Tyrone C. "DoD Budget Request Adapts to Fiscal Realities, Hagel Says." *American Forces Press Service*, March 6, 2014. Accessed March 13, 2014. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=121784>.
- Martel, William C. "America's Grand Strategy Disaster." *National Interest*, June 9, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/americas-grand-strategy-disaster-10627>.
- Martel, William C. "Why America Needs a Grand Strategy." *The Diplomat*, July 18, 2012. Accessed July 28, 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2012/06/why-america-needs-a-grand-strategy/>.
- Maschke, Günter, ed. *Carl Schmitt - Staat, Großraum, Nomos*. Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1995.
- Mathews, Dewe. "To the War Room!" *Guardian*, November 14, 2001. Accessed August 7, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2001/nov/14/artsfeatures1>.
- Matlock, Jack F. Jr. *Superpower Illusions: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray--And How to Return to Reality*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Mazarr, Michael J. "The Risks of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency." *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): pp. 7-22.
- Mazza, Michael. "Asia's Four Big Questions for Obama's Second Term." *The Diplomat*, November 7, 2012. Accessed February 5, 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2012/11/asias-four-big-questions-for-obamas-second-term/>.
- McCriskin, Trevor B. *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam*. Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- McDonough, David S. "Grand Strategy, Culture, and Strategic Choice: A Review." *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 13, no. 4 (2011): pp. 1-33.
- McGann, James G. *2012 Global Go To Think Tanks Report and Policy Advice*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2012.
- McGann, James G. *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the U.S.* Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2005.

McGrath, Ben. "The Movement." *The New Yorker*, February 1, 2010. Accessed February 6, 2014.
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/02/01/100201fa_fact_mcgrath?currentPage=all.

Mead, Walter Russell. "The Tea Party in American Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 28-44.

Meaney, Thomas and Stephen Wertheim. "Grand Flattery: The Yale Grand Strategy Seminar." *The Nation*, May 28, 2012. Accessed August 22, 2014.
<http://www.thenation.com/article/167807/grand-flattery-yale-grand-strategy-seminar#>.

Mearsheimer, John J. "Imperial by Design." *National Interest*, December 16, 2010. Accessed October 24, 2013. <http://nationalinterest.org/print/article/imperial-by-design-4576?page=1>.

Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001.

"Membership Roster." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed January 29, 2014.
<http://www.cfr.org/about/membership/roster.html>.

Metz, Stephen. "A Receding Presence: The Military Implications of American Retrenchment." *World Politics Review*, October 22, 2013.

Milliken, Jennifer. "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods." *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): pp. 225-254.

Mills, Donna. "Obama: Tide of War Receding at 'Crossroads of History'." *American Forces Press Service*, September 21, 2011. Accessed May 7, 2014.
<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=65402>.

Milne, David. "Pragmatism or What? The Future of U.S. Foreign Policy." *International Affairs* 88, no. 5 (2012): pp. 935-951.

Mishra, Pankaj. "The West is Not a Model for the Rest." *Zeit*, September 13, 2014. Accessed September 17, 2014. <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-09/geopolitics-west-democracy-freedom>.

"Mission." U.S. National War College. Accessed May, 2, 2014.
<http://www.ndu.edu/Academics/CollegesCenters/NationalWarCollege.aspx>.

"Mission Statement." Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed January 29, 2014.
<http://www.cfr.org/about/mission.html>.

Morgan, Iwan E., ed. *Presidents in the Movies: American History and Politics on Screen*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Morgenthau, Hans. *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.

Morozova, Natalia. "Geopolitics, Eurasianism and Russian Foreign Policy Under Putin." *Geopolitics* 14, no. 4 (2009): pp. 667-686.

Morris, Dick and Eileen McGann. *Here Come The Black Helicopters! UN Global Governance and the Loss of Freedom*. New York: Broadside Books, 2012.

Morris, Dick and Eileen McGann. *Screwed!* New York: Broadside Books, 2012.

Morrissey, John. "Architects of Empire: The Military–Strategic Studies Complex and the Scripting of U.S. National Security." *Antipode* 43, no. 2 (2011): pp. 435-470.

Mr. Y (Wayne Porter and Mark Mykleby). "A National Strategic Narrative." Woodrow Wilson Center, 2011. Accessed November 20, 2013.
[http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/A National Strategic Narrative.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/A%20National%20Strategic%20Narrative.pdf).

Müller, Martin. "Doing Discourse Analysis in Critical Geopolitics." *L'Espace Politique* 12, no. 3 (2010).

Mutlu, Can E. and Mark B. Salter. "Discursive Turn." In *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*, edited by Mark B. Salter and Can E. Mutlu, pp. 113-119. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Narizny, Kevin. *The Political Economy of Grand Strategy*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Nathan, Andrew J. and Andrew Scobell. "How China Sees America." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 5 (2012): pp. 32-47.

National Intelligence Council. *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*. Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, 2008.

National Intelligence Council. *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*. NIC 2012-001. Washington DC: NIC, 2012.

Nau, Henry R. *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.

"Neera Tanden." Center for American Progress. Accessed February 13, 2014,
<http://www.americanprogress.org/about/staff/tanden-neera/bio/>.

Nesbett, Richard E. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...And Why*. New York: Free Press, 2003.

Neumann, Iver B. and Henrikki Heikka. "Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice: The Social Roots of Nordic Defence." *Cooperation and Conflict* 40, no. 5 (2005): pp. 5-23.

Nexon, Daniel. "The 'Failure' of the 'Reset:' Obama's Great Mistake? Or Putin's?" *Washington Post*, March 4, 2014. Accessed May 21, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/04/the-failure-of-the-reset-obamas-great-mistake-or-putinss/>.

Nijman, Jan. *The Geopolitics of Power and Conflict – Superpowers in the International System 1945-1992*. London: Belhaven Press, 1993.

Norris, John. "The Y Article." *Foreign Policy*, April 13, 2011. Accessed February 4, 2014. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/13/the_y_article.

Nye Jr., Joseph S. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.

Nye Jr., Joseph. "The Future of American Power." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): pp. 2-12.

Nye Jr., Joseph S. *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Nye Jr., Joseph S. "The War on Soft Power." *Foreign Policy*, April 12, 2011. Accessed February 4, 2014. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/12/the_war_on_soft_power.

Obama, Barack. "Inaugural Address by President Barack Obama." January 21, 2013. Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama>.

Obama, Barack. *National Security Strategy*. Washington DC: The White House, 2010.

Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address." January 28, 2014. Accessed May 22, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/28/president-barack-obamas-state-union-address>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks of President Barack Obama – As Prepared for Delivery Address to Joint Session of Congress." February 24, 2009. Accessed June 5, 2014. http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by President Obama and Vice President Xi of the People's Republic of China Before Bilateral Meeting." February 14, 2012. Accessed March 13, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/14/remarks-president-obama-and-vice-president-xi-peoples-republic-china-bil>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President at the National Defense University." May 23, 2013. Accessed May 23, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university>.

Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony." May 28, 2014. Accessed August 12, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-west-point-academy-commencement-ceremony>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria." September 10, 2013. Accessed April 28, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan." December 1, 2009. Accessed June 10, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address." January 27, 2010. Accessed June 5, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>.

Obama, Barack H. "Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address." January 24, 2012. Accessed August 12, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/01/24/remarks-president-state-union-address>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning." June 4, 2009. Accessed June 10, 2014. http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament." November 17, 2011. Accessed March 11, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President to the 113th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars." July 23, 2012. Accessed June 10, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/07/23/remarks-president-113th-national-convention-veterans-foreign-wars>.

Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006.

Obama, Barack. "Transcript: Obama's Speech Against The Iraq War." October 2, 2002. Accessed June 10, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99591469>.

Obama, Barack. "Transcript: President Obama's Speech Outlining Strategy to Defeat Islamic State." *Washington Post*, September 10, 2014. Accessed September 17, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/full-text-of-president-obamas-speech-outlining-strategy-to-defeat-islamic-state/2014/09/10/af69dec8-3943-11e4-9c9f-ebb47272e40e_story.html.

Obama, Barack. "Transcript of President Obama's Commencement Address at West Point," May 28, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/transcript-of-president-obamas-commencement-address-at-west-point.html>.

O'Hanlon, Michael. *A Moderate Plan for Additional Defense Cuts*. Washington DC: Brookings, 2013.

O'Hanlon, Michael. "How to Solve Obama's Grand Strategy Dilemma." May 23, 2014. Accessed August 6, 2014.
<http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2014/05/23-obama-grand-strategy-dilemma-ohanlon>.

O'Hanlon, Michael. "The Obama Defense." *Foreign Affairs*, May 28, 2014. Accessed June 2, 2014. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141473/michael-ohanlon/the-obama-defense?nocache=1>.

O'Reilly, Bill. *Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. "Geopolitical Structures and Cultures: Towards Conceptual Clarity in the Critical Study of Geopolitics." In *Geopolitics, Global Problems and Regional Concerns*, edited by Lasha Tchantouridze, pp. 75-102. Winnipeg: Centre for Defence and Security Studies, 2004.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. "Postmodern Geopolitics? The Modern Geopolitical Imagination and Beyond." In *Rethinking Geopolitics*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, pp. 16-38. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. "The Frustrations of Geopolitics and the Pleasures of War: *Behind Enemy Lines* and American Geopolitical Culture." *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (2005): pp. 356-377.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. "Theorizing Practical Geopolitical Reasoning: The Case of the United States' Response to the War in Bosnia." *Political Geography* 21, no. 5 (2002): pp. 601-628.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. "Understanding Critical Geopolitics." In *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, edited by Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan, pp. 107-123. London, Portland: Frank Cass, 1999.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid and John Agnew. "Geopolitics and Discourse." *Political Geography* 11, no. 2 (1992): pp. 190-204.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid and Simon Dalby. "Introduction: Rethinking Geopolitics: Towards a Critical Geopolitics." In *Rethinking Geopolitics*, edited by Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Simon Dalby, pp. 1-15. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid, Simon Dalby, and Paul Routledge, eds. *The Geopolitics Reader*. London, New York: Routledge, 2006.

Packard, George R. "The United States-Japan Security Treaty at 50." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (2010): pp. 92-103.

Panetta, Leon. "Speech delivered at the Shangri-La Security Dialogue." June 2, 2012. Accessed April 07, 2014.
<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1681>.

Panetta, Leon. "Statement on Defense Strategic Guidance." January 5, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2014.
<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1643>.

Parent, Joseph M. and Paul K. MacDonald. "The Wisdom of Retrenchment." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2011): pp. 32-47.

Parker, Geoffrey. *The Geopolitics of Domination*. London, New York: Routledge, 1988.

Parsons, Christi and Kathleen Hennessy. "Obama Will Explain 'Interventionist' Foreign Policy at West Point." *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 2014. Accessed August 29, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-obama-foreign-policy-20140525-story.html>.

Paul, Darel E. "The Siren Song of Geopolitics: Towards a Gramscian Account of the Iraq War." *Millennium* 36, no.1 (2007): pp. 51-76.

Payne, Rodger A. "Cooperative Security: Grand Strategy Meets Critical Theory?" *Millennium* 40, no. 3 (2012): pp. 605-624.

"People." Center for a New American Security. Accessed February 5, 2014.
http://www.cnas.org/people?field_people_type_tid=663.

Peoples, Columba and Nick Vaughan-Williams. *Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2010.

Perez-Rivas, Manuel. "Bush Vows to Rid the World of 'Evil-doers'." *CNN*, September 16, 2001. Accessed August 12, 2014.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/U.S./09/16/gen.bush.terrorism/>.

Pfaff, William. "Manufacturing Insecurity." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 6 (2010): pp. 133-14.

Podesta, John. "U.S. Rebalance to Asia: Japan as the Key Partner." Speech at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, April 13, 2012. Accessed February 13, 2014.
<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2012/04/13/11491/u-s-rebalance-to-asia-japan-as-the-key-partner/>.

Poelle, Mark. *Raising Cartographic Consciousness – The Social and Foreign Policy Vision of Geopolitics in the Twentieth Century*. Lanham: Lexington, 1999.

Pollard, Tom. "The Hollywood War Machine." *New Political Science* 24, no.1 (2002): pp. 121-139.

Poole, Stuart. "What is the Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture." *Review of International Studies* 29 (2003): pp. 279-284.

Posen, Barry R. "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony." *International Security* 28, no. 1 (2003): pp. 5-46.

Posen, Barry R. "Pull Back: The Case of a Less Activist Foreign Policy." *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2013): pp. 116-128.

Posen, Barry R. *Restraint. A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Posen, Barry R. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1984.

Posen, Barry R. and Andrew L. Ross. "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy." *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996/1997): pp. 5-53.

Powell, Robert. "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate." *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (1994): pp. 313-344.

Power, Marcus. "Digitized Virtuosity: Video War Games and Post-9/11 Cyber-Deterrence." *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 2 (2007): pp. 271-288.

Power, Marcus and Andrew Crampton, eds. *Cinema and Popular Geo-Politics*. Oxon: Routledge, 2007.

Power, Marcus and Andrew Crampton. "Reel Geopolitics: Cinemato-graphing Political Space." *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (2005): pp. 193-203.

Prager, Dennis. *Still the Best Hope: Why the World Needs American Values to Triumph*. New York: Broadside Books, 2012.

Preble, Christopher A. *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Preble, Christopher A. "The Revolving Door, Think Tanks and the MIC." *The National Interest*, December 29, 2010. Accessed April 11, 2014.
<http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-skeptics/the-revolving-door-think-tanks-the-mic-4646>.

“Project for the New American Century.” IPS Right Web. Accessed January 21, 2014. http://www.rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/project_for_the_new_american_century.

“Public Sees U.S. Power Declining as Support for Global Engagement Slips.” Pew Research Center. December 3, 2013. Accessed August 6, 2014. <http://www.people-press.org/2013/12/03/public-sees-u-s-power-declining-as-support-for-global-engagement-slips/>.

Rachmann, Gideon. “American Nightmare.” *Financial Times*, March 16, 2012. Accessed June 1, 2014. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/941a0132-6d37-11e1-ab1a-00144feab49a.html#axzz39PtVqDti>.

Rachmann, Gideon. *Zero-Sum World: American Power in an Age of Anxiety*. London: Atlantic Books, 2010.

Rafferty, Kevin. “Where is the Global Leadership?” *Japan Times*, November 12, 2013. Accessed August 4, 2014. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/11/12/commentary/world-commentary/where-is-the-global-leadership/#.U9-WrhacIoE>.

Remnick, David, “Going the Distance.” *The New Yorker*, January 27, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2014. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-2?currentPage=all>.

“Research.” Center for a New American Security. Accessed February 5, 2014. <http://www.cnas.org/research-areas>.

Reus-Schmidt, Christian. “Reading History through the Constructivist’s Eye.” *Millennium* 37, no. 2 (2008): pp. 395-414.

Rich, Andrew. *Think Tanks, Public Policy, and the Politics of Expertise*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Robb, David L. *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2004.

Rogin, Josh. “Obama Embraces Romney Advisor’s Theory on ‘The Myth of American Decline’.” *Foreign Policy*, January 25, 2012. Accessed August 4, 2014. http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/26/obama_embraces_romney_advisor_s_theory_on_the_myth_of_american_decline.

Romney, Mitt. *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2010.

Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): pp. 144-172.

Rose, Steve. "The U.S. Military Storm Hollywood." *Guardian*, July 6, 2009. Accessed August 12, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/jul/06/us-military-hollywood>.

Rosecrance, Richard and Arthur A. Stein. "Beyond Realism: The Study of Grand Strategy." In *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*, edited by Richard Rosecrance and Arthur A. Stein, pp. 3-21. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Rosecrance, Richard and Arthur A. Stein, eds. *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Ross, Robert S. "China's Naval Nationalism: Sources, Prospects, and the U.S. Response." *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): pp. 46-81.

Ross, Robert S. "The Problem with the Pivot." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2012): pp. 70-82.

Rotkopf, David. "Obama's 'Don't Do Stupid Shit' Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2014. Accessed August 22, 2014. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/06/04/obama_dont_do_stupid_shit_foreign_policy_bowe_bergdahl.

Rourke, Ervin J. "Military Education for the New Age." In *American Defense Policy*, edited by Paul J. Bolt, Damon V. Coletta and Collins G. Shackelford Jr., pp. 322-326. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

Rowley, Christina and Jutta Weldes. "The Evolution of International Security Studies and the Everyday: Suggestions from the Buffyverse." SPAIS, University of Bristol, Working Paper No.11-12.

Rubin, Jennifer. "Obama is the War-Wearied One." *Washington Post*, September 9, 2014. Accessed September 17, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2014/09/09/obama-is-the-war-wearied-one/>.

Ruggie, John Gerard. "The Past as Prologue? Interests, Identity, and American Foreign Policy." *International Security* 21, no. 4 (1997): pp. 89-125.

Ruggie, John Gerard. *Winning the Peace America and World Order in the New Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Rupert, Mark. *Ideologies of Globalization: Contending Visions of a New World Order*. New York, London: Routledge, 2000.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge, 1978.

Said, Edward H. *Orientalism*. Reprinted with a new preface. London: Penguin, 2003.

Salter, Mark B. and Can E. Mutlu, eds. *Research Methods in Critical Security Studies: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Samuels, Richard J. *Securing Japan: Toyko's Grand Strategy and the Future of Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.

Sanger, David. "Pursuing Ambitious Global Goals, But Strategy is More." *New York Times*, January 20, 2013. Accessed November 14, 2013.

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/21/us/politics/obamas-foreign-policy-goals-appear-more-modest.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&_

Sapolsky, Harvey M., Eugene Gholz, and Caitlin Talmadge. *U.S. Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy*. New York and London: Routledge, 2009.

Sarkesian, Sam C., John Allen Williams, and Stephen J. Cimbala. *U.S. National Security: Policymakers, Processes & Politics*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008.

Sasgupta, Sunil and Stephen P. Cohen. "Arms Sales for India." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 22-26.

Sauer, Abe. "Retreat, Sell! 'Battle: LA' and Product Placing the Marines." *Brandchannel*, March 14, 2011. Accessed July 16, 2013.

<http://www.brandchannel.com/home/post/2011/03/14/retreat-sell!-battle-la-and-marine-corps-product-placement.aspx>

Saunders, Paul J. "The Five Most Abused Foreign-Policy Cliches." *National Interest*, March 1, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-five-most-abused-foreign-policy-cliches-9978?page=2>.

Savage, Michael. *Trickle Down Tyranny*. New York: William Morrow, 2012.

Scheinmann, Gabriel M. and Raphael S. Cohen. "The Myth of 'Securing the Commons'." *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2012): pp. 115-128.

Schmitt, Carl. *Der Nomos der Erde*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1950.

Schmitt, Gary and Tom Donnelly. "No Superpower Here." Center for Defense Studies, January 9, 2012. Accessed, May 7, 2014.

<http://www.defensestudies.org/cds/no-superpower-here/>

Schogol, Jeff. "Transformers Beat G.I. Joe in Battle for DOD Support for Summer Blockbusters." *Stars and Stripes*, May 27, 2009. Accessed July 14, 2013.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/transformers-beat-g-i-joe-in-battle-for-dod-support-for-summer-blockbusters-1.92061>

Scott, A. O. "One Small Step for Man, One Giant Leap for Autobots." *New York Times*, June 28, 2011. Accessed November 12, 2012.

http://movies.nytimes.com/2011/06/29/movies/transformers-dark-of-the-moon-theyre-at-it-again-movie-review.html?ref=movies&_r=0

Scott, A. O. and Manohla Dargis. "Super-Dreams of an Alternate World Order." *New York Times*, June 27, 2012. Accessed August 15, 2012.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/movies/the-amazing-spider-man-and-the-modern-comic-book-movie.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 See also.

Scott, Mike. "Aaron Eckhart Went Through Military Training to Make 'Battle: Los Angeles' Seem Real." *The Times-Picayune*, March 14, 2011. Accessed July 16, 2013. http://www.nola.com/movies/index.ssf/2011/03/aaron_eckhart_went_through_mil.html.

Shafer, Byron E. *Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Shanker, Tom. "Warning Against Wars Like Iraq and Afghanistan." *New York Times*, February 25, 2011. Accessed May 7, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/26/world/26gates.html?_r=0.

Shapiro, Michael. *Cinematic Geopolitics*. Oxon: Routledge, 2009.

Sharkey, Betsy. "Movie Review 'G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra'." *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 2009. Accessed August 8, 2014. <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/08/entertainment/et-gi-joe8>.

Sharp, Joanne P. *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Sharp, Joanne P. "Reel Geographies of the New World Order: Patriotism, Masculinity, and Geopolitics in Post-Cold War American Movies." In *Rethinking Geopolitics*, edited by Simon Dalby and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, pp. 152-170. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Shear, Michael D. "Obama Insists U.S. Will Not Get Drawn Into Ground War in Iraq." *New York Times*, September 17, 2014. Accessed September 17, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/18/world/middleeast/obama-speech-central-command-isis-military-resolve.html?_r=0.

Sheehan, Michael. *International Security: An Analytical Survey*. Boulder: Lynne Rinner Publishers, 2005.

Sicherman, Harvey. "Robert Strausz-Hupé: His Life and Times." *Orbis* (Spring 2003): pp. 205-207.

Sieren, Frank. "Opinion: The World's Superpower No More." *Deutsche Welle*. July 15, 2014. Accessed August 4, 2014. <http://www.dw.de/opinion-the-worlds-superpower-no-more/a-17788131>.

Singer, Peter W. "Bad Idea for the Pentagon's Idea Shop." Brookings, October 29, 2013. Accessed April 04, 2014. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/10/29-bad-idea-for-pentagons-office-of-net-assessment-singer>.

Singh, Abhijit. "Rebalancing the Maritime Pivot to Asia." *The Diplomat*, September 17, 2013. Accessed November 20, 2013.

<http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/rebalancing-the-maritime-pivot-to-asia/>.

Singh, Robert. *Barack Obama's Post-American Foreign Policy: The Limits of Engagement*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.

Sirota, David. "25 Years Later, How 'Top Gun' Made America Love War." *Washington Post*, August 26, 2011. Accessed July 17, 2013.

http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-08-26/opinions/35271385_1_pentagon-brass-military-budget-top-gun.

Skypek, Thomas M. "In Defense of Net Assessment." *National Interest*, November 16, 2013. Accessed April 05, 2014. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/defense-net-assessment-9411>.

Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "A Grand Strategy of Network Centrality." In *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*, edited by Richard Fontaine and Kristin M. Lord, pp. 45-56. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2012.

Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "America's Edge." *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (2009): pp. 94-113.

Slaughter, Anne-Marie. "Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy for His Second Term? If Not, He Could Try One of These." *Washington Post*. January 18, 2013. Accessed June 2, 2014.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/does-obama-have-a-grand-strategy-for-his-second-term-if-not-he-could-try-one-of-these/2013/01/18/ec78cede-5f27-11e2-a389-ee565c81c565_story.html.

Sloan, Geoffrey. *Geopolitics in United States Strategic Policy, 1890-1987*. Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1988.

Sloan, Geoffrey. "Sir Halford J. Mackinder: The Heartland Theory Then and Now." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (1999): pp. 15-38.

Smith, Gayle E. *In Search of Sustainable Security*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress, 2008.

Smith, Steve. "The Discipline of International Relations: Still an American Social Science?" *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2, no. 3 (2000): pp. 374-402.

Smith, Steve. "The United States and the Discipline of International Relations: 'Hegemonic Country, Hegemonic Discipline'." *International Studies Review* 4, no. 2 (2002): pp. 67-85.

Smith, Woodruff D. "Friedrich Ratzel and the Origins of Lebensraum." *German Studies Review* 3 (1980): pp. 51-68.

Snyder, Jack. *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1977.

Spetalnick, Matt. "Obama's Syria 'Red Line' Has Echoes in His Warning to Ukraine." *Reuters*, February 20, 2014. Accessed June 3, 2014.
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/20/us-ukraine-crisis-obama-idU.S.BREA1J2C920140220>.

Spiegel, Steven L. "Traditional Space vs. Cyberspace: The Changing Role of Geography in Current International Politics." *Geopolitics* 5, no. 3 (2000): pp. 114-125.

Spykman, Nicholas J. *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007; originally published in 1942 by Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Spykman, Nicholas J. *The Geography of the Peace*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1943.

Steinberg, James and Michael O'Hanlon. "Keep Hope Alive." *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2014): pp. 107-117.

Steinmetz, Katy. "Top 10 Buzzwords: 10. *Leading from Behind*." *TIME*, December 7, 2011. Accessed April 23, 2014.
http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101344_2100571_2100582,00.html.

Stevenson, David. *1914-1918 The History of the First World War*. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

Steyn, Mark. *After America: Get Ready for Armageddon*. Washington DC: Regnery, 2011.

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay. "Obama Defends Strategy in Afghanistan." *New York Times*, August 17, 2009. Accessed June 10, 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/18/us/politics/18vets.html>.

Stone, Adolf. "Geopolitics as Haushofer Thought It." *Journal of Geography* 52 (1953).

Stone, Diane. *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*. New York: Psychology Press, 1996.

Strausz-Hupé, Robert. *Geopolitics - The Struggle for Space and Power*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942.

Strausz-Hupé, Robert. "Review of *The Geography of the Peace*, by Nicholas J. Spykman." *Military Affairs* 8 (1944): pp. 144-145.

“Studies in Grand Strategy.” The Bradley-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy, Spring 2010.

Subramanian, Arvind. “Globalization in Retreat.” *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): pp. 2-7.

Subramanian, Arvind. “The Inevitable Superpower.” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 5 (2011): pp. 66-78.

Suid, Lawrence H. *Guts and Glory: The Making of the Military Image in Film*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2002.

Sumida, Jon. “Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (1999): pp. 39-62.

“Susan E. Rice.” Brookings. Accessed February 13, 2014.
<http://www.brookings.edu/experts/rices>.

Talbott, Strobe. *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*. New York: Random House, 2002.

“Targeted Killings and Drones.” Human Rights Watch. Accessed June 10, 2014.
<http://www.hrw.org/topic/counterterrorism/targeted-killings-and-drones>.

“The Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy and Studies in Grand Strategy Graduate Seminar.” Yale University. Accessed August 6, 2014.
<http://iss.yale.edu/grand-strategy-program>.

“The China Syndrome.” *The Economist*, June 8, 2013. Accessed August 16, 2013.
<http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21579006-american-grumbings-about-their-geopolitical-rival-are-not-about-power-other>.

“The Decline of Deterrence.” *The Economist*, May 3, 2014, pp. 37-39.

“The Emerging Anti-Access/Area-Denial Challenge.” Center for Strategic and International Studies. Accessed February 13, 2014.
<http://csis.org/publication/emerging-anti-accessarea-denial-challenge>.

“The NSA Files.” *Guardian*. Accessed May 27, 2014.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/the-nsa-files>.

“The Top Talk Radio Audiences.” *Talkers Magazine*. Accessed August 7, 2014,
<http://www.talkers.com/top-talk-radio-audiences/>.

Thompson, Mark. “Michèle Flournoy Departs.” *TIME*, December 14, 2011. Accessed, April 3, 2014. <http://nation.time.com/2011/12/14/michele-flournoy-departs/>.

Thompson, Mark. “The Two-MRC Strategy: Major Regional Contingencies, or Mythical Routine Canards?” *TIME*, January 4, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2014.

<http://nation.time.com/2012/01/04/the-two-mrc-strategy-major-regional-contingencies-or-mythical-routine-canards/>.

Thompson, Nicholas. "Review Essay. Ideas Man." *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2012): pp. 148-152.

"Thomson Reuters Research Analytics Unveils 2013 Release of Its Journal Citation Reports." Thomson Reuters. Accessed September 17, 2014.
<http://thomsonreuters.com/press-releases/062013/2013-journal-citation-reports>.

Three-Brennan, Megan. "Poll Shows Isolationist Streak in Americans." *New York Times* April 30, 2013. Accessed June 2, 2014.
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/01/world/american-public-opposes-action-in-syria-and-north-korea.html?_r=1&.

Totman, Sally. *How Hollywood Projects Foreign Policy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

"Transcript: Senate Intelligence Hearing on National Security Threats." *Washington Post*, January 29, 2014. Accessed, May 5, 2014.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/transcript-senate-intelligence-hearing-on-national-security-threats/2014/01/29/b5913184-8912-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267_story.html.

"Transformers: Dark of the Moon Filmed at Hurlburt; Airmen Included as Extras." U.S. Air Force. Accessed June 30, 2011.
<http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123262258>.

Trotta, Daniel. "Iraq War Costs U.S. More Than \$2 Trillion: Study." *Reuters*, March 14, 2013. Accessed August 7, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/14/us-iraq-war-anniversary-idU.S.BRE92D0PG20130314>.

Twombly, Jim. *The Progression of the American Presidency: Individuals, Empire, and Change*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Ucko, David H. *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

Ullman, Richard. "The U.S. and the World: An Interview with George Kennan." *New York Review of Books*, August 12, 1999. Accessed August 22, 2014.
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1999/aug/12/the-us-and-the-world-an-interview-with-george-kenn/>.

"Unified Command Plan." U.S. Department of Defense. Accessed September 17, 2014. http://www.defense.gov/news/UCP_2011_Map4.pdf.

U.S. Air Force Office Entertainment Liaison Office. "Wings Over Hollywood." Accessed July 17, 2013, <http://www.airforcehollywood.af.mil/>.

U.S. Army's Office of the Chief of Public Affairs. "Mission." OPCA West. Accessed July 17, 2013. <http://www.army.mil/info/institution/publicAffairs/ocpa-west/faq.html>.

U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps. *Counter-Insurgency Field Manual*. New York: Cosimo, 2006.

U.S. Department of Defense. *Overview – FY 2013 Defense Budget*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012.

U.S. Department of Defense. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2006.

U.S. Department of Defense. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010.

U.S. Department of Defense. *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2014.

U.S. Department of Defense. *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012.

U.S. MC Motion Picture and TV Liaison Office. "FAQ." Accessed July 17, 2013. <http://www.hqmc.marines.mil/divpa/Units/LosAngelesPublicAffairs/FAQ.aspx>.

U.S. National War College. *Course 1, Syllabus – Block A: Philosophies of Statecraft* (Year: 1999-2000). Accessed May 2, 2014. <http://www.resdal.org/Archivo/syll1-a.htm>.

U.S. National War College. *Course 1, Syllabus – Course Overview* (Year: 1999-2000). Accessed May 2, 2014. <http://www.resdal.org/Archivo/syll1-over.htm>.

U.S. Navy Office of Information-West. "Our Mission Statement." Accessed July 17, 2013. <https://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navinfo/navinfowest.html>.

U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services. *Department of Defense Authorization of Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2015 and the Future Years Defense Program*. March 5, 2014. Accessed September 17, 2014. http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/download/hearing_03-05-14-a.

Valantin, Jean-Michel. *Hollywood, the Pentagon and Washington: The Movies and National Security from World War II to the Present Day*. London: Anthem Press, 2005.

van Tol, Jan, Mark Gunzinger, Andrew Krepinevich, and Jim Thomas. *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept*. Washington DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010.

Walker, R.B.J. "History and Structure in the Theory of International Relations." In *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, edited by James Der Derian, pp. 308-339. New York: New York University Press, 1995.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*. Cambridge: University Press, 1991.

Walt, Stephen M. "A Bandwagon for Offshore Balancing?" *Foreign Policy*, December 1, 2011. Accessed November 20, 2013. http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/01/a_bandwagon_for_offshore_balancing.

Walt, Stephen M. "Offshore Balancing: An Idea Whose Time Has Come." *Foreign Policy*, November 2, 2011. Accessed August 4, 2014. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/11/02/offshore_balancing_an_idea_whose_time_has_come.

Walt, Stephen M. "Sloppy Journalism at the *New York Times*." *Foreign Policy*, May 1, 2013. Accessed June 3, 2014. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/05/01/sloppy_journalism_at_the_new_york_times.

Walt, Stephen M. "Ten Lessons on Empire." *Foreign Policy*, July 13, 2009. Accessed November 20, 2013. http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/07/13/ten_lessons_on_empire.

Waltz, Kenneth. *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

Waxman, Matthew C. "Obama's Guantanamo Legacy." Council on Foreign Relations. June 12, 2013. Accessed June 5, 2014. <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism-and-the-law/obamas-guantanamo-legacy/p30926>.

Weaver, Ole. "The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations." *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): pp. 687-727.

Weber, Cynthia. *Imagining America at War: Morality, Politics, and Film*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Weber, Cynthia. *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Weisgerber, Marcus and John T. Bennett. "Pentagon Determining Fate of Revered Net Assessment Office." *Defense News*, October 15, 2013. Accessed April 04, 2014. <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131015/DEFREG02/310150031/Pentagon-Determining-Fate-Revered-Net-Assessment-Office>.

Weldes, Jutta. "Going Cultural: Star Trek, State Action, and Popular Culture." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28, no 1 (1999): pp. 117-134.

Weldes, Jutta. "Popular Culture, Science Fiction, and World Politics." In *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links Between Science Fiction and World Politics*, edited by Jutta Weldes, pp. 1-27. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Weldes, Jutta, ed. *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links Between Science Fiction and World Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Weldes, Jutta, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall, eds. *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy is What States Make of It." *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1992): pp. 391-425.

White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

White, Hayden. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978

Whitlock, Craig. "Drone Strikes Killing More Civilians Than U.S. Admits, Human Rights Groups Say." *Washington Post*, October 22, 2013. Accessed June 10, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/drone-strikes-killing-more-civilians-than-us-admits-human-rights-groups-say/2013/10/21/a99cbe78-3a81-11e3-b7ba-503fb5822c3e_story.html.

"Who We Are." National Intelligence Council. Accessed April 4, 2014. <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-who-we-are>.

Williamson, Samuel R. Jr. *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.

Wilson, Scott. "Obama, Romney Differ on U.S. Exceptionalism." *Washington Post*, September 26, 2012. Accessed April 28, 2014. http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-09-26/politics/35497342_1_obama-and-romney-exceptionalism-clinton-global-initiative.

Wilson, Scott. "On Syria, Obama's Past Words Collide with National Security Implications." *Washington Post*, February 02, 2014. Accessed April 23, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/on-syria-obamas-past-words-collide-with-national-security-implications/2014/02/20/2f61ad7a-9969-11e3-b931-0204122c514b_story.html.

Wilson, Scott and Al Kamen. "'Global War on Terror' is Given a New Name." *Washington Post*, March 25, 2009. Accessed March 14, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2009/03/24/AR2009032402818.html>.

Wodak, Ruth and Michael Meyer. "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory, and Methodology." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, pp. 1-33. London: SAGE Publications, 2009.

Wolkersdorfer, Günter. "Karl Haushofer and Geopolitics - The History of a German Mythos." *Geopolitics* 4, no. 3 (1999): pp. 145-160.

Woodward, Bob. *Obama's Wars*. London: Simon and Schuster, 2010.

Work, Robert O. "AirSea Battle: Power Projection in the Mature Guided Munitions Era." In *AIE Counter A2/AD Conference*. Washington DC. October 26, 2010.

Work, Robert O. and Shawn Brimley. *20YY: Preparing for War in the Robotic Age*. Washington DC: Center for a New American Security, 2014.

Zakaria, Fareed. "Obama's Leadership is Right For Today." *Washington Post*, May 29, 2014. Accessed June 10, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-obamas-disciplined-leadership-is-right-for-today/2014/05/29/7b4eb460-e76d-11e3-afc6-a1dd9407abcf_story.html.

Zakaria, Fareed. "Stop Searching For an Obama Doctrine." *Washington Post*, July 6, 2011. Accessed August 5, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/stop-searching-for-an-obama-doctrine/2011/07/06/gIQAQMmI1H_story.html.

Zakaria, Fareed. *The Post-American World*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2008.

Zakaria, Fareed. *The Post-American World: Release 2.0*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2011.

Zakheim, Dov. "A Budget Strategy That Courts Disaster." *Foreign Policy*, January 5, 2012. Accessed May 7, 2014. http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/05/a_budget_strategy_that_courts_disaster.

Zehfuss, Maja. *Constructivism in International Relations: The Politics of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Zengerle, Patricia and Matt Spetalnick. "Obama Wants to End 'War on Terror' But Congress Balks." *Reuters*, May 24, 2013. Accessed May 23, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/24/us-usa-obama-speech-idU.S.BRE94M04Y20130524>.

Zenko, Micah. "Most. Dangerous. World. Ever." *Foreign Policy*, February 26, 2013. Accessed May 7, 2014. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/02/26/most_dangerous_world_ever.

Zenko, Micah and Michael A. Cohen. "Clear and Present Safety." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (2011): pp. 79-93.